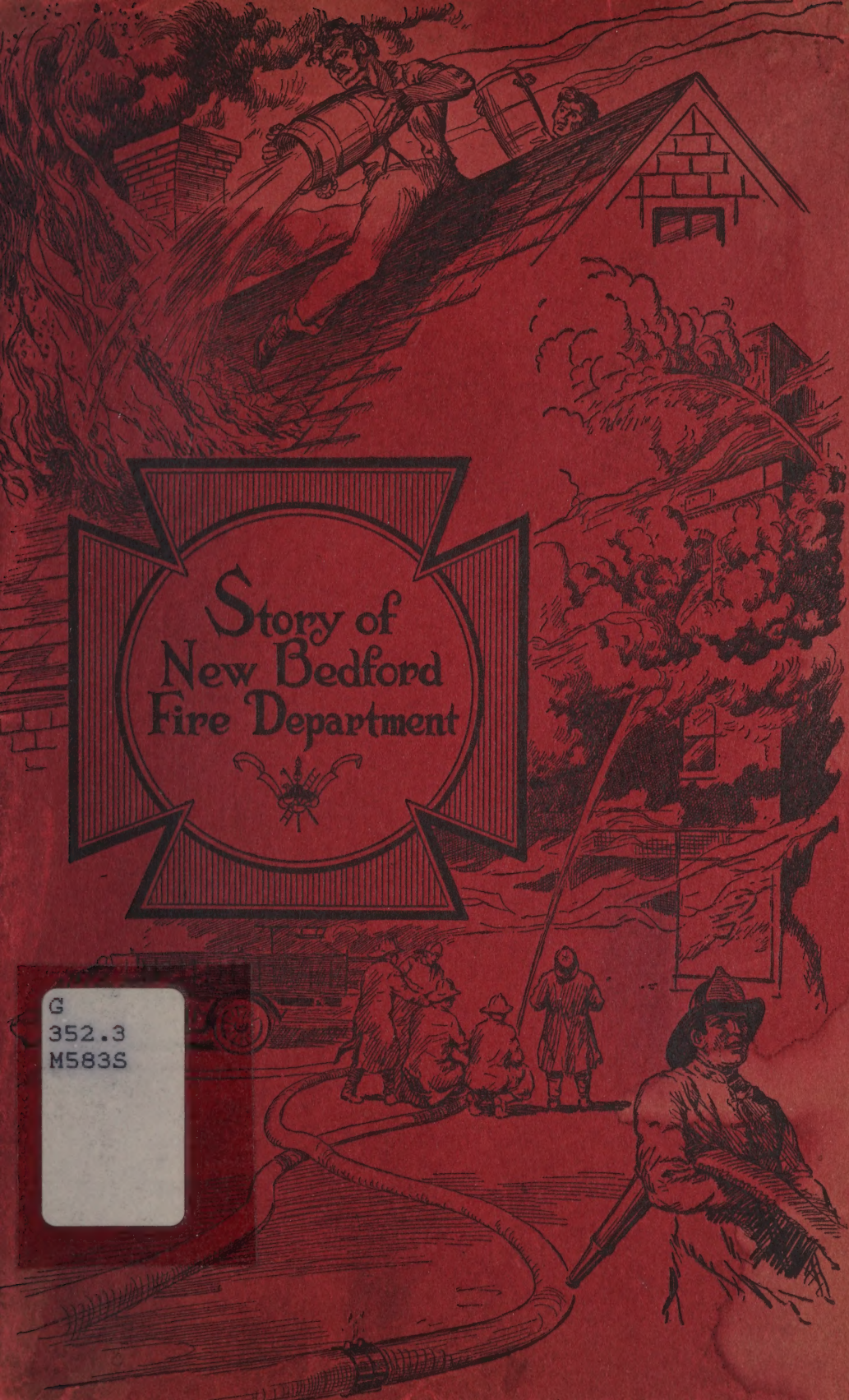

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STORY OF NEW BEDFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT

BY

B. Frank Michelsen

1927
Reynolds Printing
New Bedford, Mass.

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
NEW BEDFORD, MASS.

PROLOGUE

The people of American cities have a greater fondness for their fire departments than for any other of their public activities. The fire fighting force occupies a position that is unique. That schools are more important is clearly recognized, but not even in schools is such pride shown as the townspeople show in their firemen and their fire-fighting apparatus. They constitute, by all odds, the most popular department of the public service, and have ever since the days when the hand engine companies were first organized. In every town, from NEW YORK to SLEEPY HOLLOW, you will find a conviction among the inhabitants that, man for man and piece for piece, theirs is the best fire department in the world.

The reason for this lies in the fact that fires and fire-fighting minister to the human need for excitement. Today the firemen are paid specialists, permanently employed, but in the old days leading citizens volunteered to man the ropes. When steam engines and horse-drawn apparatus were introduced many of the old volunteers continued as call men, and others found a means of indulging their interest in fires by joining the Protecting Society. They were willing, indeed eager, to work at fires, but no one ever heard of their volunteering to teach school or to do police work or to serve the public in any other capacity.

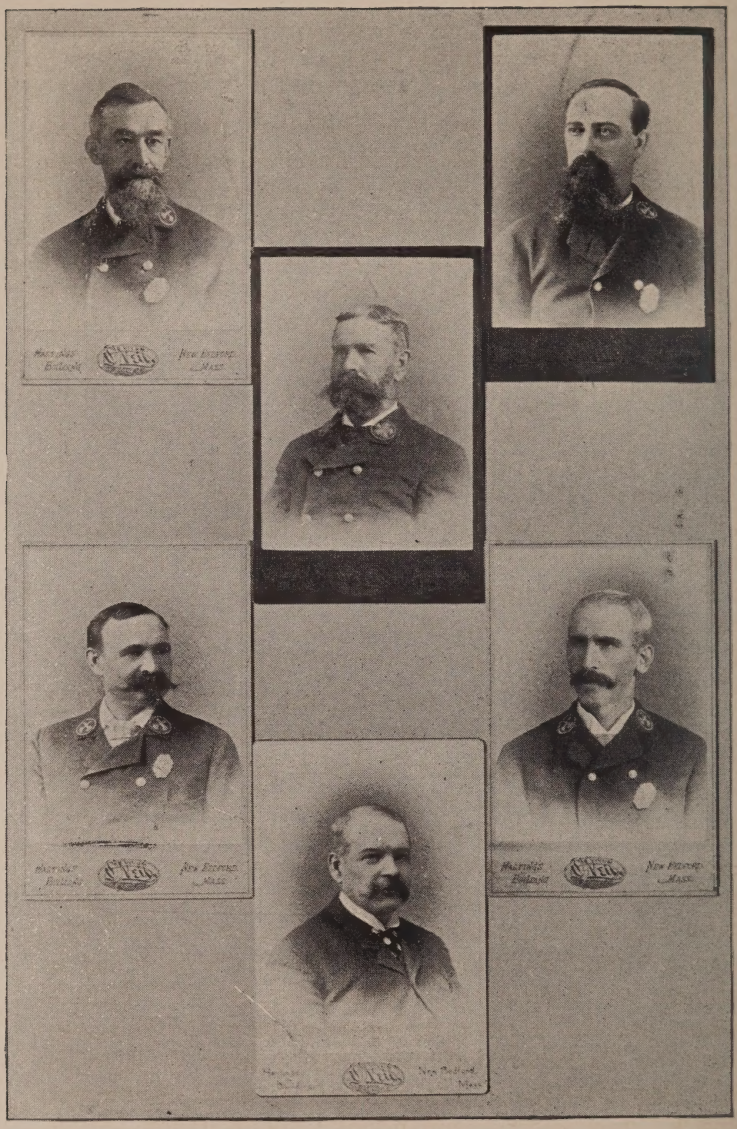
This enthusiasm, shown by those who seek some connection with the fire department, is shared to an extent by the people as a whole. To them a big fire is entertainment which has the virtue of being free to all. Apparatus speeding through the streets, bells ringing and sirens howling, make the most blasé among us to stop and look, and the man whose feet do not itch to set out in pursuit is exceptional. When firemen tackle a spectacular fire they are doing a day's work, and work attended with considerable danger, but they are also putting on a great show in which the people take a huge satisfaction. That is why there is such general interest in the fire department, and such pride. The average citizen is not critical. He does not know a fire is being fought expertly or incompetently. All he knows is that he is getting a good deal of excitement and is thankful to the firemen as the source of it.

It is said, and truly, that American fire departments are the most efficient in the world. As people we are apt to boast of that, when in reality we should feel chagrin. The fact is that our fire-fighting forces are the best because they have to be. No other people in the world have such a penchant for burning up property as we have, and if we did not have big fire departments our losses would undoubtedly be heavier than they are. It is unfortunate that fire prevention, in this country, has lagged far behind fire-fighting.

NEW BEDFORD is like all other communities in taking a keen interest in its fire department. In 1890 the late Leonard Bolles Ellis published his "History of the New Bedford Fire Department"—a book that, for the period covered stands as an authority on fire-fighting progress in the city from the very earliest days. The reader of Ellis's book at once impressed with the extent to which his story of the city itself, and of its progress from the village days of hand engines and buckets to the city days of steam pumpers, horse-drawn apparatus and an adequate water supply. The history of fire-fighting falls into three divisions—pumps worked by hand and water drawn from wells and carried in buckets; pumps driven by steam, drawn by horses, taking their water from the street hydrants; and finally the present-day apparatus in which the gasoline engine not only propels the apparatus through the streets, but operates the pumps. Ellis has told the story of the passing from hand engines to to horses and steam, but since 1890 the history of the department has

remained unwritten. What Mr. Michelsen has done in this book is to go on from where Ellis left off, narrating the coming of the motorization era, and telling of some of the noteworthy fires of recent years. Mr. Michelsen has approached his task with the zeal of one who is intensely interested in the fire department and one who has taken pains to inform himself as to modern fire-fighting practice. While giving a general survey of fire department history from the beginning, his book is more particularly a history of the forty years which have elapsed since Ellis's publication was issued. During that period we have witnessed the passing of steam and horses, the adoption of the gasoline motor, the placing of the department on a completely permanent basis, and the coming of the two-platoon system.

COOPER GAW



1889 BOARD OF FIRE ENGINEERS

Top Left, PLINY B. SHERMAN; *Bottom Left,* HUGH MCDONALD; *Top Center,* FREDERICK B. MACY; *Bottom Center,* LUTHER G. HEWINS; *Top Right,* LORING T. PARLOW; *Bottom Right,* AUGUSTUS A. WOOD.

CHAPTER I

The first formal step in the evolution of the fire fighting forces of New Bedford was taken January 30, 1834, when an act was passed by the General Court providing for the definite establishment of a fire department. This original organization, with a total membership of 363 men was composed of six hand-engine companies, augmented by the Protecting Society, and one hook and ladder company. Engineers John Avery Parker, Andrew Robeson, and Stephen Merrihew were the officers.

Chief Engineer Parker, the first man to hold this position, was said to have been the richest man in New Bedford in his time. He built the Parker House at the corner of Purchase and Elm streets, where the Olympia Building now stands, and later organized the Merchants Bank. In 1833, one year prior to his election as chief engineer of the fire department, he erected the Parker mansion on County street, which was one of the finest homes in the community.

"Independence No. 1," was manned by 50 men, with Charles Haffords, captain and Joshua Richmond, clerk. "Citizen No. 2" company consisted of 64 members, Anthony D. Richmond being the commanding officer, and Edward Munroe, clerk. "Engine No. 3," stationed at the Head-of-the-River, had a membership of 18 men under charge of Captain Shubael H. Gifford with Jireh Swift, Jr., clerk. Captain Slocum Allen commanded "Phoenix No. 4," with Benjamin Congdon serving as clerk. This company had an enrollment of 35 members. "Columbian No. 5," with 70 members, had the largest complement of men, and was commanded by Zachariah Hillman, with Luther G. Hewins, clerk. "Mechanic No. 6" ranked second in point of numbers, having 67 men under command of Captain James Durfee, the clerk being Gamaliel Taber. George Randall was captain of the Protecting Society which consisted of 49 members, with John R. Thornton as secretary. The hook and ladder

company having a membership of but seven men was the smallest unit of the department at that time.

Prior to the formal organization of the fire department in 1834, volunteer fire fighting was under the active direction of a Board of Firewards. The original board consisted of the following citizens; William Rotch, Jr., Thomas Hazard, John Howland, Mannasseh Kempton, Jeremiah Mayhew, and Abraham Smith. They were appointed in 1796, and served in this capacity until 1802.

At this time there were but two hand-engines in commission, "Independence No. 1," and "Citizen No. 2." Both machines were operated by hand-brakes and fed from water buckets, which were carried by public-spirited citizens.

The Bedford Fire Society was organized in 1807, with a membership of 30 men. In case of fire each member was expected to use his own judgment as to whether or not the dwelling house, shop or store of a fellow member was in greatest danger, and to proceed to such place as quickly as possible with his buckets and bags.

The New Bedford Protecting Society organized in 1830, was the outgrowth of a Vigilance Committee which had been formed to protect the community against riots. During its many years of activity the Protecting Society saved many thousands of dollars worth of property.

Ten years after the formal establishment of the fire department, the volunteer firemen were placed upon a salary basis of 10 dollars a year for each member. This act was necessary in order to secure a full complement of men.

In 1844, William H. Taylor, who had been a member of the Board of Firewards for a number of years, was elected chief engineer of the department, with George Howland, Jr., and Zachariah Hillman as assistants. The latter was elected head of the department in 1848. Ezra K. Delano served as chief engineer in 1852; and was succeeded by George Wilson in 1853. Joshua B. Ashley, father of Mayor Charles S. Ashley, held this position the following year. Zachariah Hillman was again elected to this office in 1855.

During 1856 the hand-engine regime reached its height.

Nine pieces were in commission at this time, together with a hook and ladder company and the Protecting Society.

Two memorable events occurred during the tenure of office of Chief Engineer Tillinghast P. Tompkins, head of the department from 1858 until 1871. The first, when the city was visited by a destructive fire on Water street in 1859, which destroyed over a quarter of a million dollars worth of property; and the second, the advent of the steam fire engine, which was the logical aftermath of this conflagration.

This new mode of fire fighting had just begun to come into common use during the decade prior to the Civil War. The coming of the steam fire engine was keenly resented by the many friends of the hand-engine era, and though the opposition was mainly confined to ridicule in New Bedford, other cities witnessed acts of violence.

In 1855, for example, when the Mayor of Chicago sent a committee to Cincinnati to inspect this new type of fire apparatus, a hostile crowd blew the steam chest off the engine, and also killed the engineer.

However, New Bedford ordered its first steamer within 10 days after the Water street conflagration, and the new piece was delivered in February 1860, just six months later. This engine, named "Onward No. 1," was put in commission in the brick building at the corner of Pleasant Street and Mechanics Lane. When called to a fire the new steamer had to depend on horses brought from the city barn. A second steamer, "Progress No. 2," was put in service a few months later. Next came "Excelsior No. 3," in 1864; then "Cornelius Howland No. 4," supplemented three years later.

Chief Engineer Tompkins resigned his position in 1871, after having brought the department through that truly epoch-making period when the hand-engine gave way to the steamer. At a banquet, held in his honor in City Hall, he was presented a gold medal by the members of the fire department.

The adoption of the fire alarm telegraph signal system was the noteworthy event that took place during the term of office of Chief Engineer Abraham H. Howland, Jr., son of the first Mayor of New Bedford. The first alarm over the new system,

which was installed in the early part of September 1871, was a test on the evening of the 25th, when Box 18 at the corner of Purchase and North streets was sounded.

On December 13, 1873, "Excelsior No. 3" was placed in reserve, and the company reorganized to operate the latest addition to the department, "Zachariah Hillman No. 5."

Samuel C. Hart served as chief engineer during 1874. The following year he was succeeded by Moses H. Bliss, who served until 1877, when Frederick Macy became head of the department.

Four engine companies, one hose company and one hook and ladder company, with the Protecting Society, comprised the fire department when Chief Macy assumed office. During his 27 years' tenure of office, 1877 to 1904, he saw the department double in size. New apparatus was purchased during this period to replace all of the original equipment and also for the new companies which had been formed.

A regulation uniform was adopted, in 1880, for the permanent members of the fire force. The installation of private fire alarm boxes in many of the important industrial plants was begun in 1882; when a considerable extension of the signal system was made.

A new engine company for the south end of the city was organized on the first of November, 1882, and named, "Frederick Macy No. 6," after the chief. This company had its quarters in the new station on Fourth street, (now Purchase) at the head of Potomska street.

In 1890 another company, designated "Engine No. 7," was established in the northwest part of the city. A new station had been erected at the corner of Durfee and Cottage streets to quarter this latest company. Then came "Engine No. 8" several years later. This steamer was housed in the finest fire station in this city, at the time. This structure was erected at the corner of Acushnet avenue and Davis street, and many citizens were highly skeptical as to the need of such a company at the north end of the city where pasture land predominated in the early 90's. However, men of vision had faith that the city would grow, and they were fore-sighted enough to move onward.

When Chief Macy completed his duties in June 1904, there were in active service, seven engine companies, two hose companies, three aerial hook and ladder companies, and the Protecting Society, while a new company had been planned for the west end.

Chief Macy possessed, to a remarkable degree, the high regard of the men who served under him during his many years of service. The following tribute, written for The Standard by Charles S. Kelley, President of the Protecting Society for many years, admirably describes the public life of Chief Macy:

"I was pained to learn of the death, this morning, of Frederick Macy, Chief Engineer of our Fire Department. For the forty-five years that I have known him intimately, I have always found him a good friend, neighbor and a model citizen. Having for nearly a quarter of a century fought fire as President of the Protecting Society side by side with him, I feel competent to judge his qualifications. New Bedford never had a superior Chief Engineer of its Fire Department, if his equal. His efficiency was manifest, during his twenty-seven years of service as Chief, in his excellent judgment and economic management of all of that constantly growing department. The record of small losses being far less, I believe, than that of any city of equal size in this country, is the best tribute to his successful management of one of the most important departments of our city government. We have lost a good citizen, a faithful public servant; respected by his department and citizens generally; modest, kind-hearted; an honest man."

So, just as we may trace the remarkable growth of our city in the recent highly interesting historical review of the New Bedford Institution for Savings written by Henry H. Crapo, and also in the excellent Centenary book of the Merchants National Bank by Zephaniah W. Pease, we, likewise, may sense this rapid development of New Bedford by the expansion of the Fire Department from six companies in 1877, when Chief Macy began his term of office, to twelve companies in 1904, when he completed his duties.

CHAPTER II

The progress of mankind is evidenced by the constantly varying reasons for fires. In an article in The Standard, written by Cooper Gaw, now editor of the paper, the author traced the development of the city from a whaling port to an industrial center by an analysis of some unusual fires which have occurred in New Bedford. First, there were the destructive fires in paraffin works and oil refineries; then came the familiar cry of "fire in the picker-room" as the city changed over from the whaling industry to the manufacture of cotton. Today we find electric flat-irons, gasoline, and oil-burners as the origin of many of our fires. Tomorrow, it may be wireless rays that will be causing them. So, a review of some of the outstanding fires in local history becomes more than a record of the activities of our fire fighting forces.

The most terrifying spectacle, as well as most extensive fire in the history of New Bedford, occurred 147 years ago, on September 5, 1778, when a large part of Bedford Village, together with a great deal of shipping in the harbor, was burned by invading British troops. The loss was estimated at over half a million dollars.

On that fateful September evening of nearly a century and a half ago, the invading troops put the torch to warehouses, ship-yards, rope walks and a fleet of 70 vessels. This act of war was carried out by the British soldiers, who had been landed earlier in the day on Clarks Point, near the present location of the Almshouse. It required 36 transports, under the protection of two frigates and an 18 ton brig, to bring the troops to this port. Barges carried the invaders ashore from the ships which were at anchor in the lower harbor, and upon landing the enemy proceeded to march north to the center of the town, where they arrived at dark.

The rope walks and distillery belonging to Isaac Howland were first set on fire, then the soldiers moved down to the water front with their lighted torches. Shops and stores

were soon belching forth flames, which must have resembled a colossal display of red fire as they leaped skyward with their forking tongues of fire. Dwelling houses and barns were lapped up with great rapidity as the burning brands were carried by the wind from the buildings to which the torch had been applied.

Then, what an awe-inspiring scene it must have been when the fleet of 70 vessels in the harbor became a prey to the on-rushing flames; Soon the cables burned through and the ships began to drift across the river. Some ran aground near Fort Phoenix, while others brought up on the different islands in the Acushnet. The brig "No Duty on Tea" was carried northward until grounding on Marsh Island, where it burned to the water's edge.

The town was laid desolate. To add to the horror of the situation, all able-bodied men of the community were with the Colonial troops in Rhode Island, leaving mostly women and children as witnesses of the appalling destruction of their material belongings. It is truly remarkable that some gentle Quaker woman did not anticipate Sherman's immortal phrase on that memorable occasion.

The next disastrous fire to occur here swept the oil works of Samuel Leonard, January 30, 1844, just ten years after the formal organization of the fire department. This plant was the largest oil refinery in the United States. All of the buildings were destroyed, as well as a large amount of oil. This was the most destructive fire yet to visit an industrial concern in New Bedford. The loss was over $70,000.

Certain men, who refused to help save the oil that was in storage, unless paid a dollar an hour for their labor, were driven off the property by the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department, William H. Taylor. The latter was so incensed that he broke his staff of office over their heads.

"Franklin No. 10," the first hand-engine to arrive on the scene, was out of order and failed to get water on the blaze.

Another $70,000 fire that destroyed the oil and candle works of Sanford and Howland, and extended to Wilcox's lumber yard, occurred March 28, 1853. The local depart-

ment was aided by an engine from Fairhaven and one from the Head-of-the-River.

Two buckets of whiskey punch, instead of hot coffee which had been ordered, were served by mistake to those who prevented the spread of the flames to a nearby cooper shop.

One of the most destructive, as well as extensive and spectacular fires ever to visit New Bedford, occurred on August 24, 1859, when it was necessary to resort to the use of dynamite in order to check the flames. Twenty buildings on Water street, just north of Middle street, were destroyed, together with two large lumber yards. The whaling vessel, "John & Edward," with several wharves also went up in smoke. The total loss was about $225,000.

The fire had already involved a number of buildings prior to the sounding of the alarm. All the structures on Water street as far as North street, were destroyed. As the flames rapidly worked westward to Second street, it was decided to use dynamite, and the building on the northwest corner of North and Second streets was blown up. This enabled the fire engineers to stop the spread of flames in this direction. The forking tongues of fire, checked in one direction, worked their way eastward with great rapidity until they reached a large quantity of oil that was stored near the wharf belonging to Richmond and Wilcox. The intense heat burst the casks, and the released oil took fire as it ran into the river. The "John & Edward" was quickly enveloped in the blazing oil as it floated out on the tide.

Burning embers dropped in all directions and threatened 14,000 barrels of oil, valued at $200,000, that was in storage near Water and North streets. However, public-spirited citizens saved this lot of oil by brushing the firebrands away as they fell.

Following this fearful conflagration, public opinion crystallized by the local newspapers, took up the demand for more adequate fire protection. So came the adoption of the steam fire engine.

The first large fire to occur here, after the adoption of "steam," destroyed the interior of Liberty Hall on February 10, 1864. This building, which stood on the present site

of the Merchants National Bank, was new. It had been erected to replace the original Liberty Hall at the cost of $60,000. The latter structure, had likewise been destroyed by fire in 1854.

This second blaze illuminated the sky for miles around and greatly menaced the center of the city. The new steamers, "Onward No. 1" and "Progress No. 2," pumped continuously for 20 hours before the flames were subdued.

The "Great Chicago Fire" occurred October 9, 1871, from which date we now take our Fire Prevention Week. The entire city was destroyed with the loss of 250 lives. Chief Damrell, of the Boston Fire Department, was sent to Chicago to learn the cause of this appalling conflagration and the reason it had spread over such a large area.

The Chief was asked, on his return, if there was any chance of a similar fire occurring in Boston.

"There is not," he asserted in reply. "Our Fire Department is too efficient."

The following year "Cornelius Howland No. 4," of the New Bedford Fire Department, rendered valuable aid at the "Great Boston Fire" that took a toll of $60,000,000 worth of property during the four days which it burned.

Benjamin C. Groves, now chauffeur of Engine 2, and the oldest member of the present fire force in point of service, went to Boston with "No. 4" on that memorable occasion, in the capacity of torch boy.

Three alarms, which brought out the entire Fire Department, were sounded in rapid succession for a destructive and highly spectacular fire in Kirby's paint works on Willis Point, in "Holy Acre," on the evening of April 1, 1887. Three dwelling houses and the paint works were practically destroyed; while many other buildings were more or less damaged by exposure fires.

Chief Macy received burns about his face at this fire, which he said was the hottest that he had ever fought. First Assistant Engineer Michael Kennedy sustained several bruises when he stepped into a depression in the ground near a hydrant, that he did not see because of the dense smoke.

"Onward No. 1" was scorched by the intense heat and this steamer was compelled to abandon the nearest hydrant to the burning plant. "No. 1" later drafted water from the pond belonging to the Wamsutta Mills about a thousand feet to the northeast.

The Pleasant Street church, located nearly a half mile to the southwest, caught fire from drifting sparks; but this blaze was soon extinguished. Burning embers were also found as far west as Cedar street.

A prior fire at the paint works, Christmas Eve, 1885, was even more spectacular than the later blaze. The only thing that prevented a general conflagration in New Bedford, that cold winter's night, was the snow-laden roofs of the surrounding buildings. Burning embers were found as far west as Rockdale avenue and as far south as Union and County streets.

A distinguished citizen of New Bedford, in recalling the incident, said that the Christmas Eve fire back in 1885, was the most thrilling fire he had ever witnessed. "Burning paints and oils" he said, "poured into the Acushnet River, just off Willis Point, and the waters, almost to the river's center, were completely covered with blazing oils."

A sudden blast, accompanied by a tremendous vibration similar to an earthquake, startled the residents of the south end just after eight o'clock on the morning of February 27, 1897. The fire bells began to ring. Box 74—Acushnet Mills—rang out on the cold air in echo to the dying sound, which had been caused by a terrific boiler explosion in the power house of this plant.

Two persons were killed instantly, the fireman who had been tending the boiler, and a boy of sixteen. Many other employees suffered minor injuries.

Patrolman Foley, one of the first to arrive on the scene of the disaster, immediately turned in an alarm from the company's private fire alarm box, despite the protests of several employees who wanted the policeman to wait for orders from the superintendent of the plant. Even before the arrival of all the first-alarm apparatus, the fire bells began to peal out a second call for additional fire companies.

The fearful force of the explosion rent the high-pressure boiler to pieces, which flew in all directions, carrying death and destruction in its wake. First, the boiler room was completely demolished, then the picker room was torn open by a flying fragment. Another piece shot over No. 1 mill, four stories high, and crashed through the roof of Police Station No. 2, a quarter of a mile away. Some painters, at work in the ward room of this building, had a narrow escape when this part of the wrecked boiler tore through the heavy timbers, almost landing in the laps of the men as they mixed their paints.

Still another section, weighing about 200 pounds, blazed an arching trail through the air to a dwelling house on Front street, near Rivet. The east end of this building was ripped open as the mass of hot metal ended its precipitate flight.

The remainder of the boiler and part of the fire box, a great bulk of twisted iron, rose high in the air, dropping hot coals as it sped eastward toward the Acushnet River, where it plunged into the icy waters amid a cloud of steam and smoke.

Scores of weavers were cut by fragments of flying glass from the thousands of window panes which were shattered as the boiler was torn from its foundations. Many girls in the cloth room were also cut and bruised; while others had their hair singed as they made their way to safety. The room in which they were at work was entirely razed by the force of the explosion and the ruins were speedily lapped up by the flames.

All this in the space of a few seconds! Then came the first alarm. The bells had not finished when the nearest engine company, "Frederick Macy No. 6," appeared on the scene, immediately followed by its hose tender and Truck 3 from Station 6. Then, amid the clang of gongs and flying sparks, "Cornelius Howland No. 4" drew up at a hydrant.

These companies had hardly stretched-in with their lines of hose when "Hose 1," "Progress No. 2," with hose-reel tender, and Truck 1 from the Central Fire Station, together with "Zachariah Hillman No. 5," from County and Hillman streets, arrived in rapid succession.

In the meantime, "Onward No. 1" was speeding south on Purchase street to cover-in at the center house. Just as this company had backed into the station, with the drivers still in their seats, the second alarm began to sound. Again the horses laid into their collars as the apparatus doors were pulled, and, with clouds of black smoke belching from her stack, "Onward No. 1" rolled onward in answer to this second call. At the same time Engine 7, which had just covered-in at Station 5, rolled south on County street, in response to this second summons.

Then, as in the days of yore, the Veteran Firemen, half an hundred strong, raced with their hand-drawn hose-reel to the scene of action, where, according to The Standard, "they worked like Trojans."

The Protecting Society also responded in goodly numbers, and performed splendidly.

Steamers 2, 4, 6 and 7 were located at the two hydrants at the corner of Water and Delano Streets, with eight lines of hose, two from each engine, stretched straight down Delano to the burning plant. The staccato explosions of the exhaust steam mingled with black smoke from these closely grouped steamers, together with the spinning fly wheels and valve gears, furnished a big thrill to the throng of people that rapidly made its way to this destructive fire.

Energetic work on the part of the firemen prevented the blaze from spreading to the main plant, though the intense heat of the flames caused some of the sprinklers to operate in this section of the mill.

"Low water" probably caused the explosion which resulted in a greater number of casualties, than any previous or subsequent occurrence in the history of the city, though most of the casualties were of a minor nature.

Probably the most dramatic fire to visit New Bedford was the one which gutted nearly all the interior of City Hall on Tuesday morning, December 11, 1906. This blaze was discovered a short time after the Registrars of Voters had begun to take a recount of the municipal election, which had apparently elected Charles S. Ashley by the slim margin of 70-odd votes over Thomas Thompson. Three blocks of votes

had been opened, when Robert A. Terry, who was present in the interest of Mr. Ashley, discovered the flames. Mayor Thompson got "first water" when he threw ice water on the blaze from a pitcher that was standing on a table in the room.

In the meantime, someone rushed in with the information that the flames were bursting through the roof of the structure and that all the building was afire.

"Mr. Chairman," shouted Registrar Willard N. Lane above the din and confusion, "I move that we adjourn until one o'clock and that the ballots be returned to the safe of the City Clerk." The motion was carried unanimously and without discussion.

The ballots were quickly returned to their proper envelopes and replaced in the ballot-boxes. They were then carried back to the vault in the Public Library, now the Municipal Building. This vault had been under Police guard since the previous Friday, because of a rumor to the effect that someone intended to attempt to break in and tamper with the ballots. The Citizens Party countered this move by placing Deputy Sheriffs on guard to watch the policemen.

The central fire station was first notified of the fire by James T. Murray, who was watching the recount. In the meanwhile another spectator turned in a bell alarm from Box 27, Purchase Street and Mechanics Lane. Engines 2 and 4, Hose 1 and 3, and Truck 1 responded.

Chief Edward F. Dahill, who had succeeded Chief Macy as head of the department in 1904, subsequently ordered a second alarm, and Engines 1 and 5, and Truck 2 answered. Other apparatus was later ordered to the scene by telephone.

Eight streams were played on the fire, which was so hot that it melted a play pipe that was in use on the roof of the burning structure. The water poured upon the blaze ran down through the floors, causing the ceilings in some parts of the building to fall. The Protecting Society used 69 waterproof blankets to cover the office furniture. This action prevented much water damage.

Defective wiring is supposed to have caused the fire, which, by coincidence, could not have occurred at a more tense moment.

The flame-swept structure was erected in 1838 — 1839 at a cost of $60,000. The simple, but dignified architecture of the building made it a very distinctive landmark. It was also highly prized because of its historic associations. So, New Bedford owes a great deal to the foresight of the municipal government for deciding to have the damaged structure remodeled and made into our present Public Library. The sympathetic treatment of the plans for the enlarged building by the architect, Nat C. Smith, has preserved the dignified lines of the original, which means that it will continue to be a distinctive landmark for years to come.

CHAPTER III

In the early days of fire fighting, volunteers were always more or less ready to lend a hand on the drag-ropes of a hand-engine. Then came the horses with the advent of the steam fire engine, while the gasoline motor serves as the motive power today. However, the second method was undoubtedly the most picturesque of the three.

Horses were first used over half a century ago, and are still in use in certain communities to draw fire apparatus. Moreover, the alert, high-spirited blacks and grays which dashed through the streets of New Bedford but a few years back, accompanied by the strident clanging of gongs and roar of heavy wheels rattling over the pavements, leaving a trail of black smoke and flying sparks in the wake of the apparatus, gave a thrill which modern motor equipment fails to equal.

However, there always was a real job for the man behind those mettlesome steeds while responding to an alarm of fire. Whenever the lights flashed in a fire station, and the house-gong began to sound and the punch register started to record the box-number, there seemed to be injected into those intelligent animals, that had been quietly munching oats but a moment before, a fighting spirit that required much skill and determination on the part of the driver to control.

Two thrilling runaways by the same three-horse-hitch attached to Truck 2, about 17 years ago, illustrates this point. One night the alarm struck when the regular driver was off duty. As the spare man and the tillerman finished "hitching-up," the commanding officer gave the count. The apparatus doors swung open, and the truck rolled slowly out into the street. Then, after being headed north, the horses settled into their stride.

The rattle and the roar of the speeding truck, together with the clang of the gong, keyed the horses up to a high pitch, and when they turned east on Sawyer street they took the bits in their teeth. Then began a wild dash down the street to-

wards the embankment at the end, which had a sheer drop of ten or fifteen feet to the river below. The runaways rapidly neared the embankment, while the driver was unable to check their mad career.

The tillerman, Charles E. Robertson, who was guiding the rear wheels of the truck, quickly realized the seriousness of the situation and turned the tiller-wheel over to another fireman who was riding on the running board of the apparatus. Robertson then made his way over the ladders of the swaying truck and up to the driver's seat, where he took the reins from the well nigh exhausted spare man, and brought the horses to a stop — eight feet from the embankment at the foot of Sawyer street.

While Mr. Robertson did not receive a medal of honor from any society for his heroic act, nevertheless, he certainly displayed great courage as well as skill in saving the life of a comrade. Moreover, had the runaways continued in their wild dash, they would surely have gone to their own destruction over the embankment into the Acushnet River below. with them would have gone the truck, which would have cost at least $15,000 to replace today. There is no telling what would have happened to the driver, or to Robertson— had the latter been a few seconds slower in acting.

On another occasion the same horses, but driven by a different spare man, once more took the bits in their teeth while responding to a night alarm. Charles Robertson was again at the tiller-wheel. When he sensed that he was confronted with another runaway, with no brother fireman to help this time, he groped in the dark for the iron pin that is used to lock the wheel, and managed to secure it. Robertson then began his second perilous journey over the swaying truck, which, on this occasion was speeding down Coggeshall street. With no one at the tiller-wheel to hold the rear of the apparatus steady, the danger of falling under the onrushing truck was greater than before. But Robertson took a chance.

Again he made the driver's seat and pulled in the wild-eyed runaways; again he saved thousands of dollars worth of property for the city and saved a comrade's life. For just

as a crash with the Coggeshall street bridge was imminent—Robertson brought the high-spirited animals to a standstill.

For half a century, dating from 1860 to 1910, the horse-driven steamer held full sway in New Bedford. Then came our first motor combination pumper and hose car in 1910, "Engine No. 9."

This pumping engine, however, was preceded by two other pieces. The first was a semi-motor hose reel, drawn by one horse and "pushed" by water pressure; while the other piece was Hose 1, a Locomobile combination chemical and hose car.

The semi-motor hose reel was unwittingly created by "Ben" Groves while responding to a south end mill fire one night. "Progress No. 2," of which Mr. Groves was the engineer, had taken a hydrant at the corner of Water and Delano streets. After allowing what he thought was ample time for the hose reel tender to lay a line, "Ben" turned on the water. The dense crowd that had flocked to the scene, however, had prevented a free passage for the reel, and when the water came it caught the hose reel when about half way to the mill yard. The water sent the hose reel spinning, and crowd or no crowd, the horse kicked up his heels, making the best time that he had ever made in stretching-in, aided, of course, by the suddenly converted hydraulic motor fire apparatus.

Hose 1, the first gasoline motor apparatus, made its advent here October 19, 1908, just 18 years ago. It was installed in the old central fire station on Purchase Street, corner of Mechanics Lane.

This piece was the first to be manned by a permanent crew of officers and men, with Captain Fred A. A. Greene as commanding officer, Frederick E. Ricketson as lieutenant, James H. Downey as chauffeur, and Ambrose F. Merchant, William N. Whelan and Horace Bennett as hosemen.

Lieutenant Ricketson has since worked his way up to the position of Second District Chief; while Ambrose F. Merchant is now Third District Chief. William N. Whelan is at present captain commanding Truck 1 and also stands first on the eligible list for promotion to the position of Dis-

trict Chief. James H. Downey, the chauffeur of this first gasoline motor piece, has been the master mechanic of the department for several years, with the rank of captain.

Other pieces of motor apparatus were later purchased, and by 1917 all the department had been motorized. There are now eight motor pumping engines in service, five of which are combination pumpers and hose cars, while the other three are triple combinations, being equipped with chemical or booster tanks for small-stream service, in addition to their pumps and hose compartments.

Three combination chemical and hose cars, together with a straight chemical car for oil fires, are also in commission at the present time. Four electrically-driven aerial ladder trucks, and one gasoline-driven city service ladder truck are also in service.

Other motor equipment consists of a 7-passenger touring car for the use of the Chief of Department, with four 2-passenger cars for the Deputy and District Chiefs. There are also two trucks for the use of the mechanical and fire alarm service, together with a car for the inspector.

It would probably take something like $225,000 to replace this wealth of mobile equipment of our Fire Department.

CHAPTER IV

There have been three changes in the agency of control of the Fire Department during the past 129 years. First, there was the Board of Firewards from 1796 to 1852, then came the Board of Fire Engineers from 1852 to 1923, while we now have the latest plan whereby the Mayor of the city is the Executive Officer or Fire Commissioner, ex-officio. The former Fire Engineers are now designated Chief of Department, Deputy Chief, and First, Second and Third District Chiefs, respectively. These officers have also been placed under civil service protection, with tenure of office. They may retire on half pay after 20 years of service if physically incapacitated.

Under this last reorganization the Fire Department Committee of the City Council, a committee which has provided a great deal of fire-works during its deliberations in times past, was unwittingly abolished by the members of the municipal government of 1923.

The first step towards a permanent organization for our fire force was taken when a full-paid and full-time crew was established to man Hose 1 in 1908. By 1917 the entire department had been motorized. In that year, all firemen, with the exception of the Board of Fire Engineers, were put upon a permanent basis with civil service protection.

The two-platoon system was adopted in 1920. Under this plan all officers and men, except the Chief of Department, perform tours of duty varying from 10 hours to 24 hours on a stretch. For example, a fireman reports for duty at eight o'clock in the morning at his proper fire station, and goes off duty at six o'clock that night. He does this for two successive days. Then on the third day he reports for duty at eight o'clock in the morning to perform a tour of duty of 24 consecutive hours. The fourth and fifth days call for 14-hour stretches beginning at 6 P. M. of each day. He then goes off duty at eight o'clock on the morning of the sixth day for a 24-hour

relief. This schedule renews itself every seventh day.

In New Bedford 50 per cent of the off-shift is assigned to second-alarm response, while 50 per cent of the remainder of this shift is detailed for third-alarm duty, with the balance on fourth or general alarm calls. However, whenever a private box or an extra alarm is sounded, practically every fireman within hearing distance will respond. This fine spirit of the members of the Fire Department in making such response while off duty deserves the highest commendation.

The present Executive Officer of the Fire Department is the Honorable Charles S. Ashley, who, by virtue of his election as Mayor of New Bedford in December 1926, became the head of the department, ex-officio.

In the Spring of 1923 Mayor Remington appointed Edward F. Dahill as Chief of Department, with tenure of office. Prior to this appointment he had served as Chief Engineer for 19 years. During these years the picturesque "horse" and "steam" regime has been superseded by motor equipment; while a permanent fire force has taken the place of the callmen. So fire fighting has become a vocation, whereas, for a period of about a century and a half it had been an avocation.

The new Central Fire Station, Pleasant and North streets, one of the finest and most modern fire stations in the country, and which the firemen call "Hotel de Luxe," was erected in 1916. This building houses four companies, the fire alarm signal room, and also serves as headquarters for the Chief of Department, the Deputy Chief and the Second District Chief.

James J. Donaghy began his experience as a fire fighter in New Bedford as a torch boy back in 1884. Having served as First Assistant Engineer for 19 years, beginning his first term in 1904, he was made a permanent officer four years ago with the rank of Deputy Chief.

The Deputy Chief became a callman with "Cornelius Howland No. 4" in 1885. He was elected a Second Lieutenant with this company in 1887, and First Lieutenant in 1889. During that year Lieut. Donaghy went to Boston with No. 4 in answer to a call for help for the second large Boston fire, which occurred on Thanksgiving eve. He was elected Cap-

tain of No. 4 in 1890. The election of "Jim" Donaghy to the office of Second Assistant Engineer of the department in 1894, at the age of twenty-six, gave him the honor of being the youngest man ever to hold this position.

John W. Donaghy, a brother of the Deputy Chief, now holds the position of First District Chief. For many years "Big John," as his friends call him, served as Captain of Truck 3 at the south end. He was elected Third Assistant Engineer to succeed Frank R. Pease, who had been made Second Assistant to take the place of Engineer William E. Watson, shortly after the latter's death on December 29, 1916. After holding the office of Second Assistant Engineer for a very brief period in April 1923, Mr. Donaghy was appointed to his present position of First District Chief.

Second District Chief, Frederick E. Ricketson first attracted attention as the hustling Lieutenant of Hose 1 back in 1908 when this, the first permanent fire company in New Bedford, responded to all first alarms in the city. "Rick" was always in the front ranks at a fire when water or a chemical line was needed.

After two years service with this company Lieut. Ricketson was elected Captain of Engine 4 by the Board of Fire Engineers in 1910. He served in this capacity until the City Council elected him Fourth Assistant Engineer in 1920. Engineer Ricketson was appointed to his present position of Second District Chief in 1923. He alternates with the Deputy Chief in the central part of the city, which includes Stations 2, 3 and 5.

In the Spring of 1923 a very spirited contest for the office of Fourth Assistant Engineer took place. Captain Ambrose F. Merchant, who was first on the civil service eligible list, deservedly won the election after making a clean fight for it. Then came the reorganization of the agency of control of the Fire Department, and Engineer Merchant was appointed Third District Chief in charge of Stations 4, 6 and 11 in the south part of the city.

District Chief Merchant was a member of the crew which manned our first piece of motor apparatus, Hose 1. He was elected Lieutenant in 1910 by the Board of Fire Engineers,

and assigned to Station 9 at the Head-of-the-River, with Engine 9, the first motor pumper to be put in commission in New Bedford.

Engine 9 was in active service for 10 years, and during this time made more out-of-town runs than any other piece in the department. The two outstanding runs made by No. 9 occurred in 1912 and in 1916. The first run was to a serious fire in the White-Warner plant and the Union Stove Lining Co., at the Weir in Taunton. Engine 9 left her station at 7.20 P. M. on October 17, 1912 in charge of Lieut. Merchant, and was at work on the fire in Taunton within 30 minutes. At 12.16 o'clock on the morning of February 16, 1916 this same company went to Fall River to help fight a $2,000,000 fire, which threatened to wipe out the business district of that city. Captain Merchant, who had been promoted in 1914, was again in charge of No. 9. Owing to the difference in hose threads it was necessary to jam the hydrant connection to get water, but even with this delay Engine 9 was at work within 51 minutes from the time of leaving her home station. This company also became intimately acquainted with the towns of Acushnet, Dartmouth and Westport by virtue of numerous runs to these towns in answer to calls for assistance.

In taking charge of the south end fire stations District Chief Merchant succeeded the late Engineer Frank R. Pease, who was one of the most progressive and energetic officers to serve in the Fire Department. Engineer Pease always had a high regard for his successor, and once said to the writer: "I am very glad that Ambrose won the fight. He was always ready to obey orders without argument."

It is interesting to note that District Chief Merchant is the brother of Walter H. Merchant, who resigned as Captain of Engine 2 of the New Bedford Fire Department in 1920 to take a position with the New England Insurance Exchange. During the latter's eleven years membership in our department he served successively as spare engineer, then engineer, chauffeur, lieutenant, and captain. When Captain Walter Merchant took over his present duties as an Inspector attached to the Municipal Bureau of the Insurance Exchange,

he was the first man ever to graduate from a fire department to such a responsible position. His work takes him to all parts of New England. His headquarters are in Boston. The nature of his work is such as to call for a detailed knowledge of fire prevention and protection matters in order to determine the value of the several agencies in a municipality provided for such purposes. This includes water supplies, fire departments, police departments, fire alarm systems, and anything which has any bearing on the question of fire protection in a given community.

CHAPTER V

The New Bedford Fire Department, which was put upon a full paid basis in 1917, and upon a 2-platoon basis in 1920, now consists of 222 officers and men. It is organized as follows:

HONORABLE CHARLES S. ASHLEY, *Executive Officer*
EDWARD F. DAHILL, *Chief of Department*
JAMES J. DONAGHY, *Deputy Chief*
JOHN W. DONAGHY, *First District Chief*
FREDERICK E. RICKETSON, *Second District Chief*
AMBROSE F. MERCHANT, *Third District Chief*

ENGINE NO. 1

James L. Haskins, *Captain*
Ephraim L. Studley, *Lieutenant*

George H. Denham, *Chauffeur*
George T. Davis, *Hoseman*
Joseph Francis, *Hoseman*
William F. Mannion, *Hoseman*
Albert L. Audette, *Hoseman*
Ernest Lord, *Chauffeur*
Thomas F. McCauley, *Hoseman*
Alfred J. Normandin, *Hoseman*
Joseph A. McAvoy, *Hoseman*
James F. Cairns, *Hoseman*

ENGINE NO. 2

John H. McDonald, *Captain*
Herbert H. Stone, *Lieutenant*

Benjamin C. Groves, *Chauffeur*
John K. Dwyer, *Hoseman*
George F. Gleason, *Hoseman*
William Clarkson, *Hoseman*
Edmund Roberts, Jr., *Chauffeur*
William P. Robert, *Hoseman*
Joseph Robinson, *Hoseman*
Hubert Brown, *Hoseman*
Daniel J. Tarpey, *Hoseman*

ENGINE NO. 3

James H. Mahoney, *Captain*
Charles J. Calnan, *Lieutenant*

William R. Moore, *Chauffeur*
John T. Conway, *Hoseman*
Frank R. Riley, *Hoseman*
Louis E. Blossom, *Hoseman*
Benoni T. Sweet, *Hoseman*
John Sylvia, *Chauffeur*
Edward C. Neagus, Jr., *Hoseman*
Thomas F. Breakell, *Hoseman*
George H. Spooner, *Hoseman*
Eric Henthorn, *Hoseman*

ENGINE NO. 4

William S. Gatenby, *Captain*
John E. Joseph, *Lieutenant*

Manuel J. Alves, Jr., *Chauffeur*
Edward F. Wood, *Hoseman*
Frank E. Souza, *Hoseman*
James V. Brennan, *Hoseman*
Joseph A. Walker, *Hoseman*
John J. O'Brien, *Chauffeur*
Joseph C. Vincent, *Hoseman*
Joseph E. Freitas, *Hoseman*
Thomas McCue, *Hoseman*
Philias J. Chartier, *Hoseman*
Edward Dupuis, *Hoseman*

ENGINE NO. 6

Joseph Rumney, *Captain*
John E. McDonald, *Lieutenant*

Frank H. Vincent, *Chauffeur*
George H. Whelan, *Hoseman*
Thomas Wooley, Jr., *Hoseman*
Joseph Campos, *Hoseman*
Anthony V. Gracia, *Hoseman*
Henry L. Burding, *Chauffeur*
John McQuilken, Jr., *Hoseman*
Daniel O'Neil, *Hoseman*
Lawrence F. Cocking, *Hoseman*
Phillip Kilbride, *Hoseman*

ENGINE NO. 7

Edward H. Coggeshall, *Captain*
John C. Wing, *Lieutenant*

Joseph L. Crowley, *Chauffeur*
William H. H. S. King, *Hoseman*
John H. Galligan, *Hoseman*
Joseph P. Foley, *Hoseman*
Henry F. Pykosz, *Hoseman*
William J. Martin, *Chauffeur*
George W. Haskins, *Hoseman*
Henry Leeming, *Hoseman*
Michael F. Sullivan, *Hoseman*
John A. Spaulding, *Hoseman*

ENGINE NO. 9

Reuben Tabor, *Captain*
Michael J. Melia, *Lieutenant*

Horace A. Bird, *Chauffeur*
John F. Parker, *Hoseman*
Stephen F. Miller, *Hoseman*
Louis J. R. Comeau, *Hoseman*
Gilbert Green, *Hoseman*
Manuel C. Claudino, *Chauffeur*
Walter H. Hawes, *Hoseman*
William A. Nelson, *Hoseman*
Arthur J. Gallant, *Hoseman*
John Murphy, *Hoseman*

ENGINE NO. 10

Edward J. Bly, *Captain*
William F. McDonald, *Lieutenant*

Alexander Strack, *Chauffeur*
Thomas J. Summers, *Hoseman*
Albert J. Abrain, *Hoseman*
James W. Coyne, *Hoseman*
Arthur E. Dudevoir, *Hoseman*
Albert Schoene, *Hoseman*
Henry Hesford, Jr., *Chauffeur*
William H. Green, *Hoseman*
Thomas A. Bond, *Hoseman*
George D. Daudelin, *Hoseman*
Edgar J. Ross, *Hoseman*
John B. Jennings, *Hoseman*

HOSE NO. 1

Miles F. Fay, *Captain*
Albert P. Bochman, *Lieutenant*

Peter J. Cournoyer, *Chauffeur*
Manuel J. Marshall, Jr., *Hoseman*
Frederick Wignall, *Hoseman*
Arthur W. Raymond, *Hoseman*
Louis A. Cotnoir, *Chauffeur*
William E. Blanchard, *Hoseman*
James P. Quinn, *Hoseman*
Milton C. Andrews, *Hoseman*

HOSE NO. 2

Edward A. Pollock, *Captain*
Frank N. Cleveland, *Lieutenant*

Joseph G. E. Bessette, *Chauffeur*
Edward Marsh, *Hoseman*
William P. Taylor, *Hoseman*
George Klemn, *Hoseman*
Charles A. Vail, *Chauffeur*
Sam Julio, *Hoseman*
Laurence J. O'Connor, *Hoseman*
Godias J. Boucher, *Hoseman*

HOSE NO. 4

Frank A. Lewis, *Captain*
James Sanderson, Jr., *Lieutenant*

Walter Earnshaw, *Chauffeur*
Richard F. Burke, *Hoseman*
Frank Cheetham, *Hoseman*
James T. O'Brien, *Hoseman*
Allan L. Phillips, *Chauffeur*
John F. Maguire, *Hoseman*
Francis M. Dowd, *Hoseman*
Manuel A. Mendoza, *Hoseman*

HOSE NO. 5

N. H. Caswell, Jr., *Chauffeur*
Samuel Shorrock, *Hoseman*
Walter E. Cobb, *Chauffeur*
Hugh J. Kennedy, *Hoseman*

TRUCK NO. 1

William N. Whelan, *Captain*
William L. Durfee, *Lieutenant*

Norman S. Dyer, *Chauffeur*
Thomas W. Bell, *Tillerman*
George S. Allen, *Ladderman*
Robert Cocking, *Ladderman*
John T. King, *Ladderman*
Harmidas J. Roberts, *Laddermon*
Fred Clarkson, *Chauffeur*
Joseph DeTerra, *Tillerman*
Charles E. Robertson, *Ladderman*
Edward J. Regan, *Ladderman*
Joseph Miller, *Ladderman*
John J. Brennan, *Ladderman*

TRUCK NO. 2

Frank J. Nicklas, *Captain*
John E. Murphy, *Lieutenant*

William Sellecks, *Chauffeur*
Philip A. Rainville, *Tillerman*
Albert Berry, *Ladderman*
William Belisle, *Ladderman*
Theodore A. Cote, *Ladderman*
Patrick B. Costello, *Ladderman*
Walter C. Martin, *Chauffeur*
Leo F. McGoff, *Tillerman*
Roland H. Cobb, *Ladderman*
William W. Entwistle, *Ladderman*
Leonard Mason, *Ladderman*
Hervey J. Laferriere, *Ladderman*

TRUCK NO. 3

Charles E. Green, *Captain*
Arthur E. Souza, *Lieutenant*

William Beehan, *Chauffeur*
Frank T. Cooke, *Tillerman*
Thomas Collins, *Ladderman*
George Sherratt, *Ladderman*
Thomas F. Flood, *Ladderman*
Richard Pinnington, *Ladderman*
Thomas W. Whittaker, *Chauffeur*
Alfred A. DesRoches, *Tillerman*
Frank C. Corre, *Ladderman*
Peter J. Brennan, *Ladderman*
Arthur Harwood, *Ladderman*
Arthur Millette, *Ladderman*

TRUCK NO. 4

Albert Wooley, *Captain*
Percy Shepherd, *Lieutenant*

Irving W. Nelson, *Chauffeur*
Edward T. McKay, *Tillerman*
William J. Gibbs, Jr., *Ladderman*
Albert Voisine, *Ladderman*
George Klemm, *Ladderman*
Thomas E. Lundy, *Ladderman*
William A. Lenhart, *Chauffeur*
Joseph E. Pidgeon, *Tillerman*
Edwin Hibbert, *Ladderman*
Frederick Walker, *Ladderman*
Joseph Carter, *Ladderman*
Ernest J. Dearden, *Ladderman*

TRUCK NO. 5

Thomas H. Forbes, *Captain*
Ernest G. S. Teachman, *Lieutenant*

Charles H. Lawrence, *Chauffeur*
Charles A. Haskins, *Ladderman*
Lawrence J. Boland, *Ladderman*
Charles J. McKenna, *Ladderman*
James S. Cooke, *Chauffeur*
Joseph A. Mahoney, *Ladderman*
Robert J. Sullivan, *Ladderman*
Thomas Spence, *Ladderman*

HEADQUARTERS

Robert E. Allen, *Captain*
James T. Wing, *Lieutenant*
William D. Flagg, *Lieutenant*
Thomas R. F. Wholley, *Lieutenant*
Milton A. Baylies, *Operator*
Elmer H. James, *Operator*
Joseph Lajeunesse

MECHANICAL DEPT.

James H. Downey,
Master Mechanic
George H. Baylies, *Painter*
Philip J. Prevost, *Mechanic*
Raimund F. O' Brien, *Battery Man*
Thomas J. McCann, *Lineman*

INSPECTORS

Frederick G. Gifford,
Chief Inspector
Louis A. Viereck, *Inspector*
John E. Rebello, *Inspector*

CHIEF'S CHAUFFEURS

Francis J. Kennedy
John Hubbard
Francis T. Macedo, *Clerk*

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Benjamin T. Dobson

CHAPTER VI

In 1909, the year following the advent of the first piece of motor apparatus in the city, New Bedford was visited by three disastrous fires. The first one occurred on the morning of January 7th, when Hersom's soap factory at the Head-of-the-River was practically destroyed. The second threatened the south part of the city when three dwelling houses on Division street were laid low by the flames, and 12 other buildings were more or less damaged, on July 19th. The third large fire came five days after the Division street blaze. and wrought about $250,000 damage to the New Bedford Cordage Company at the west end.

Two alarms from Box 3, Lunds Corner, called Steamers 1 and 8, Hose 1 and 2, and Truck 2 to the scene of the Hersom soap factory fire, that cold January morning in 1909; while Hancock No. 9 had previously responded on a special signal. The Protecting Society also reported in large numbers.

No. 9 laid two lines with its hand hose-reel from the nearest hydrant to the burning plant. These lines were eliminated, however, when Steamer 8 began operations from the hydrant south of the factory which was between the source of supply and the hand-engine's lines.

Engine No. 1, the only company to respond on the second alarm, had steam up when she reached the fire. In fact, her safety valve began to blow when the steamer was opposite Brooklawn Park on the way to the fire. No. 1 took the hydrant that No. 9 had been using, but failed to get very much water because No. 8 was drawing about all the supply. This was due to the small water main in the street at that time, together with the fact that there was a dead end a short distance north.

The weather was bitterly cold, and the backs of the firemen were soon sheathed in ice from the flying spray

which quickly froze wherever it landed. Icy ladders also added to the difficulties of the situation.

The blaze was hottest at the rear of the factory where huge kettles of soap were boiling. A large vat containing 15 tons of nearly finished soap fell with a crash when the flames ate away the wooden foundations. Five smaller vessels met a like fate. However, much of the finished product was salvaged by the Protecting Society, which formed a long line akin to an old-fashioned bucket brigade, and passed boxes of soap and washing powder from one end of the line to the other.

To add to the excitement of it all, when the soap factory fire was at its height, Box 135, Coggeshall street and Belleville avenue, came in for a fire that destroyed a small barn and suffocated a horse. Hose 1 and crew, with Chief Dahill, went to this second fire, and left Engineer James J. Donaghy in charge of the factory blaze.

Engines 4, 5 and 7; Hose 3 and Truck 1 also responded to the second fire. Damage $300.

A modern brick building was erected by Mr. Hersom at another location in the north part of the city, near the Acushnet River, shortly after the destruction of the wooden structure at the "Head."

The Division street fire, which occurred the following Summer, was one of the hottest fires in local history. The first alarm was sounded shortly after noonday from Box 57, County and Mosher streets. This was followed by a second alarm from the same box five minutes later. The call was sent in by Engineer James J. Donaghy. Engines 1, 4, 5 and 6 Hose 1 and 3, and Trucks 1 and 3 responded.

A carpenter, who had just sat down to enjoy an after-lunch smoke, was reported to have thrown a lighted match into a bale of oakum that was on the third floor of a nearly completed tenement house near County street. This structure was a seething mass of flames within a few minutes. It was a smoldering heap of ruins, burned flat to its foundations 20 minutes later. The houses on either side were mere shells of charred timber by the time the fire had been extinguished.

The roar of the intense blaze, which sounded like a plumber's blow torch, could be heard several hundred feet away. The terrific heat blistered the paint on the doors of the Benjamin School across the street. Flying sparks ignited two roofs on County street, and both were extensively burned. A house in Morton Court was also severely scorched.

Patrolman Butts, who was one of the first to reach the fire, aided by a civilian, rescued a woman with her four-day old baby from one of the houses which was destroyed. The men took the mother and baby on a mattress and carried them to safety.

An elderly man saw sparks fall on the roof of his home while on his way to work. Immediately the shingles began to burn. Hurrying back home, greatly excited, he ordered his family to leave the house. He then went to his son's home on Brock avenue, where he collapsed. The man died three hours later.

Captain Maurice Dahill, a brother of the Chief, ran a splinter from a ladder into his hand. The injury seemed but slight. The wound became infected, however, and resulted in his death several weeks later. William N. Whalen of Hose 1, now Captain of Truck 1, received a painful injury at the Morton Court blaze when he sustained a fractured leg.

About half an hour after the first alarm, Box 58, Water and Cove streets was pulled for an exposure fire on Clark's Point, that started from a burning shingle which was carried on the northwest breeze from the main fire. Many thought that the third alarm had been sounded from Box 57. This was but natural in view of the magnitude of the blaze. Engine 2, from Station 3 at the west end, where there was no indicator at the time, got the wrong count and reported at the Division street fire where it did good work.

Steamer 7 and Truck 2 also stopped at the Division street fire. These two companies were sent down to the "Cove" when word was received that there was an exposure fire in progress.

The open lots just south of Division street undoubtedly prevented a general conflagration in the south end that afternoon. As it was, several pieces of apparatus were constantly engaged in fighting numerous roof fires.

Box 24 sounded around two o'clock for a slight blaze on Cedar street near Kempton. This made the fourth alarm within an hour and a half, and the third box to be operated during this short period.

So ended an eventful afternoon for the entire city as well as for the Fire Department. The outstanding feature of this occasion was the unusually rapid destruction of the building where the blaze originated. It is doubtful if any other structure of equal size has ever met with such sudden and complete destruction by fire in such a short interval of time, in New Bedford.

Then came the destructive fire at the New Bedford Cordage Co., on Court street, July 23rd, which caused the heaviest loss to an industrial concern in this city until the fire at the Wamsutta Mills in 1924. The rope works blaze furnished a thrilling climax to the wildest 24 hours in the history of the Fire Department. When Box 67 rang at seven o'clock that morning it marked the receipt of the twelfth alarm, including two "stills" since seven o'clock of the previous day.

The factory had just begun operations for the day when suddenly a picker burst into flames. The fire proof door leading to the main part of the plant was immediately closed, and the 300 employees quickly and orderly left the building. At the same time four lines of hose were stretched from the 1500-gallon fire pump by the private fire brigade of the factory.

In the meanwhile Superintendent Lewis sent in an alarm from the private box at the plant to which Engines 2, 4 and 5; Hose 1 and 3; Truck 1 and the Protecting Society responded. Owing to several unfortunate reasons, the fire, that promised to be of slight consequence, was enabled to work its way through to the main plant. This necessitated the sounding of another alarm, and Box 28, Court and Cedar streets, was pulled, while still another company was

called to the scene by telephone. Engines 1, 6 and 7, with Truck 3, and members of the Veteran Firemen's Association answered these later calls.

The condition of some of the steamers which worked at this fire evoked adverse criticism by a number of citizens, although, at the same time, they gave much praise to the hard-working firemen. The engineer in charge of Steamer 5 was unable to get up steam, and he was suspended from duty on account of his delay. In fairness to the engineer, however, it should be stated that the chief contributing factor which prevented his getting the steamer into action was the poor quality of the coal with which the engine was supplied. This circumstance also handicapped other steamers at this fire, and accounts for several of the weak streams which were played upon the blaze. A hurry call for coal that was adapted to fire-engine work was sent in a few hours later, and a generous amount was on hand within a few days.

The most effective streams in action were those from the fire pump at the rope works, and the 3-way deluge set that was put in operation from Steamers 5 and 7 at about 7.35 o'clock that morning. These streams, together with the hundreds of automatic sprinklers which operated, did wonderful execution. The sprinklers, pouring a screen of water throughout the two upper stories, prevented the spread of the flames to the lower floors as the tons of water flooded down to the rooms below.

Nearly all the upper portions of the factory were gutted by the blaze; while the machinery was twisted and bent by the intense heat. The total loss was estimated at $250,000.

Some imbecile or immature child added to the excitement of the occasion by turning in a false alarm from the box at the corner of Kempton and Liberty streets.

On the Sunday afternoon and evening of February 28, 1910, occurred the most destructive fire in local history since the burning of Bedford Village 132 years before. The large warehouse owned by Denison Bros. Co., at the foot of Hillman street was totally destroyed by this fire. Over 200 bales of cotton, together with much finished textile goods, which were in storage, went up in smoke. Many

trucks, coal sheds, coal-runs, and hoisting apparatus were lost. The total damage amounted to $336,950.

According to the late Engineer Frank R. Pease, both alarms for this fire were sounded from Box 21, Water and North streets, by the watchman of the warehouse plant. In a prior inspection of the burned structure, Engineer Pease had noted the serious fire hazard and lack of sprinkler system. This officer therefore suggested that the watchman be instructed to pull the "hook" a second time in the event of a serious fire occurring on a Sunday when he would be alone. Alderman Glennon, in his capacity as superintendent of the New Bedford Manufacturing Co., which plant was opposite the burning warehouse, strongly urged Chief Dahill to pull the "hook" a third time because of the great magnitude of the blaze and danger to the neighborhood. The chief refused to do so, however, and there followed a heated debate between the two men. The third alarm was not sounded.

The fire, which spread with great rapidity, was attributed to spontaneous combustion. The flames soon ate their way through the walls and the roof of the main building, and spread east and north to the coal pockets. The blaze then leaped onward toward the large coal shed beyond. The 15 compartments in this building were a seething mass of fire within a few minutes. The terrific heat set the hoisting apparatus and engine room blazing. The two boilers in this room toppled over as their supports burned away and fell into the river below. There was a roaring, hissing sound, (like a red hot horseshoe makes when thrust into a blacksmith's water barrel), as the twisted mass of hot metal struck the salt water.

It was very fortunate that the wind was blowing from the most favorable direction during the time that this fierce fire was in progress. Great volumes of sparks fell into the Acushnet River, which, had they been borne landward, would have threatened the nearby lumber district, together with the mill across the street. Some of the burning embers landed on the Fairhaven shore, while others were carried by the breeze as far north as Marsh Island, near the Coggeshall street bridge.

Two lines from the large "Underwriters' " fire pump of the cotton mill were placed at the disposal of Chief Dahill by the superintendent, Alderman Glennon. These streams were very powerful, and excited much admiration from the many spectators.

While the firemen worked as hard as possible, they were greatly handicapped by poor hose and steamers which were not in the best of condition, though operated by competent engineers.

This fire probably furnished more food for discussion than any prior blaze, save possibly the Water street conflagration in the same vicinity in 1859. However, the criticism was confined for the most part to the condition of the equipment at the latest fire. Many claimed that the two streams from the mill pump were the best played on the fire. This shows that the critics were good observers, for the Underwriters' pump, that is an essential part of the fire protection equipment of all our mills, has a capacity of from 1000 to 1500 gallons per minute. The normal capacity of the four steamers at work at this fire was 500 gallons each. Therefore, the Underwriters' pump was at least equal to two of the steamers. Nevertheless, two of the steamers were in need of repairs, while another, the spare engine in place of No. 4, was better suited to serve as a relic of the glorious past. This state of affairs was due in a measure to the fact that motor pumpers were just coming into use, and that there was a debatable question as to whether or not this new type should be adopted or the steam engine continued until the latest mode had had an opportunity to prove itself.

However, while the then members of the City Council were following the advice of the first half of the couplet,

> "Be not the first by which the new is tried,
> Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

public opinion, aroused by the great amount of constructive criticism, cleared the way for the installation of new boilers for Engines 4 and 7. New hose was also purchased, and two deck guns were added to the minor equipment of the department.

The warehouse fire was the second destructive conflagration to visit this site at the foot of Hillman street. The

New Bedford Flour Mills having been burned with a loss of $100,000 in 1870. On this occasion the Fairhaven steamer, "Contest No. 3," came over and rendered valuable assistance.

The Hacienda Building, a long, rambling wooden structure, located on Acushnet avenue, corner of Cedar Grove street, was a prey to the next big fire to occur in this city. This building was swept from one end to the other by the flames just after midnight on Sunday, February 25, 1912. The first alarm was sounded at 12.20 o'clock. This was followed by a second alarm 31 minutes later. Still later, additional apparatus was called to the scene by telephone. The total loss amounted to $75,000.

This extensive blaze developed many unusual features and also caused numerous casualties among the fire fighters. Four of the five members of the Board of Fire Engineers received injuries, as well as three hosemen.

The fire spread fan-like through the lengthy building, and then broke through the roof. When this part of the structure became involved, showers of firebrands, which were borne skyward, threatened a large number of dwelling houses to the westward.

The flames reached a large supply of fireworks which were stored in the basement of Engineer Frank R. Pease's pharmacy at the north end of the building. Soon giant cannon crackers began to explode in all directions. Red-fire started to hiss. Roman candles popped. Skyrockets also joined in the impromptu display. One errant rocket knocked a helmet off the head of a fireman. The headpiece was recovered several hundred feet away.

Escaping gas from many broken pipes inside the building added fuel to the flames. Mayor Ashley, who was one of the first on the scene intended to order the shutting off of the supply for this section of the city if something wasn't done to check the flow into the doomed structure. However, the flow was stopped by breaking and then plugging the main feed pipe in the south part of the building.

Chief Dahill was burned by a water light. Later he received a slight shock when he touched a live wire. The

chief then ordered the current off. This left the north end in darkness.

Engineer James J. Donaghy was burned about the face by the flames from escaping gas, but was able to stay on the job.

Engineer William E. Watson nearly lost his life when he was trapped in the cellar which was filled with dense clouds of smoke. This officer was making his way down stairs when the charred steps gave way. He dropped with the wreckage to the cellar stairs underneath, which also gave way, and the engineer landed in the basement. He was all alone, and it was only by chance that he was saved. A fireman, who had returned to this section of the building to examine again a gas pipe that had caused a great deal of trouble, heard the officer's calls, and brought a rescuing squad.

Engineer Frank R. Pease was the next officer to be added to the growing casualty list, when he was overcome with smoke. He was taken to Fire Station No. 10, where he was put to bed. The engineer was attended by Dr. Weeks, who found the officer in a thoroughly spent condition. He was later taken to his home on County street.

William N. Whalen of Hose 1, and Isaac Allen of Truck 1, received severe burns. Dr. Marsden attended both men, and they were able to return to duty. Hoseman Breakell of Hose 3, was overcome by smoke. His condition was very serious, and he was not expected to live. He was treated by Dr. Lamoreux. The hoseman began to mend several hours later.

When the flames had finally been extinguished, nine storekeepers, two fraternal organizations and a pool room proprietor had been burned out. They suffered damages ranging from $15,000 down to $100; while the building itself was damaged to the extent of about $35,000.

CHAPTER VII

Probably no fire in the memory of the present generation ever caused so much concern as did the Sherman stable fire on the night of June 27, 1914. If there had been a strong wind blowing that eventful evening, a conflagration as serious as the Salem fire, which had occurred but a short time before, would very likely have visited New Bedford.

The blaze was supposed to have been only a trivial affair at the beginning. Hose 1 from the central fire station next door to the burning building responded to the first call under command of Lieut. Lewis, together with Chief Dahill, who happened to be in the station at the time.

In the meanwhile the blaze had gained great headway. When it reached the haymow there was a flash of fire as the hay burst into flames. The chief then turned in a bell alarm from Box 553, that was located on the Mechanics laneside of the fire station. This was followed by second and third alarms which brought out practically all the Fire Department, veteran firemen, and the Protecting Society; while members of the Fairhaven Fire Department came over to lend a hand.

Soon the roof of the stable fell in with a crash. The tremendous heat that was released drove the mass of spectators back on Pleasant street. Burning embers filled the air in great clouds.

The roof of the then Christian Science Church on Middle street head of Sixth, next caught afire from the wind-borne sparks. Due to the prompt action of a civilian, (who broke into the basement of the church from where he made his way to the roof armed with a broom with which he was beating out the flames when the firemen arrived) this blaze was confined to a small space. The Duff building, together with the fire station and the Stone Church were also damaged by exposure fires.

Much apprehension was felt by many householders as they saw the giant clouds of flames and sparks shoot high in the air. Some of those living in the north part of the city packed up their belongings and carried them out on the lawns. Others had teams ready to cart their things away. However, with the "Great Salem Fire" still fresh in mind, it was but natural that these precautions were taken.

The illumination was so bright that it could be seen from Onset to the eastward, and from Fall River and other westward points. The scarlet clouds were also seen from Marthas Vineyard. A call was received at "The Standard" asking for information about the vivid reflection that was visible from that island.

Much added excitement was caused by the hundred or more horses prancing madly about the streets. These frantic steeds had been heroically freed from a veritable fiery furnace by several civilians and patrolmen at the outset of the fire. Nearly all the animals had been rounded up by midnight, however. Some were found as far north as the Mt. Pleasant reservoir; while one was found at the south end of the city. They were quartered at several boarding stables to await identification by their owners.

"The work of the men was very fine indeed," Chief Dahill said to a Standard reporter that night. "I was in the engine house when the call came that there was a fire in Sherman's stable. We ran in with Hose 1 chemical line. When the men got upstairs they saw they had quite a fight on their hands.

"I pulled the first alarm, and before I was through the flames burst out, and I pulled the second alarm. Almost immediately I saw the seriousness of the fire and pulled the third alarm. In the meantime I stationed the apparatus as it came on the north side of the square to intercept it. I put the Robinson engine at the southeast corner of the fire station in the mouth of the lane where the hardest drain was. Our only trouble was that No. 7 went bad."

"New Bedford residents can attribute the excellent controlling of the fire partly to the element of luck," said Mr. Paul, of Paul and Dixon fire insurance underwriters, in an

interview. "If the wind had been blowing strong in any direction, those blazing firebrands would have been wafted to many parts of the city, and the Fire Department would have had too many fires with which to cope.

"I do not wish, in the least, to detract from the credit due the fire fighters for their work, but I do say that the city has had a good piece of luck in escaping with the burned area confined to less than a city block. The small fires that were started give an indication of what might be expected in the way of a conflagration if a really hard wind had been blowing."

Many of the people in the crowd of 25,000 spectators also remarked that night on the good luck that New Bedford still had in the matter of fires. "New Bedford luck!" they said, "was responsible for the absence of wind."

Engineer William Watson, commenting on the work of the firemen, said, "I want to thank the men for their heroic work tonight. They had a big fire on their hands and did well."

The Stone church again acted as an excellent fire stop just as it did in the case of the Nash carriage factory fire in Mechanics lane a little more than half a century before on April 18, 1859. Another analogous circumstance was the liberation of 67 horses from the Elm street stables, which were involved in the fire of 1859. On this occasion, however, some of the animals ran wild about the streets for several days before all were rounded up; while all the horses from the Sherman stable were recaptured by midnight on the evening of the fire.

This last blaze caused a loss of about $50,000. It was also the first fire for which three alarms were sounded during the 24 years following the $10,000 fire at the Trinitarian church on March 11, 1890. The stable fire was also the first time that Chief Dahill had ever turned in a third alarm during the 10 years that he had been Chief Engineer.

The Empire Theatre now stands where this awe-inspiring stable fire occurred.

The next large fire in the center of the city happened on the morning of October 23, 1920, when $157,000 worth

of property went up in smoke on Union street, corner of Second. This disastrous blaze threatened to wipe out a large area near the waterfront. However, the element of luck that played a large part in the outcome of the stable fire on that memorable Saturday night in 1914, still continued to favor New Bedford at this blaze six years later. The wind died down to a gentle zephyr shortly after the flames were discovered, though a gale had been blowing during most of the previous 24 hours.

The fire had its origin in a restaurant on Union street, midway between Acushnet avenue and Second street. Due to a delayed alarm, the flames gained great headway, destroying several wooden buildings, besides causing a great deal of damage to the four-story brick structure to the westward where the blaze was stopped.

A "still" alarm was first sent to "Fire Headquarters." Hose 1, under command of Lieut. Albert Wooley, now captain of Truck 4, was dispatched to the scene. The fire was plainly visible to the crew of this piece as the apparatus rounded into Union street. A fireman was ordered to turn in an alarm from Box 561 as the hose car passed Purchase street. The fireman could not carry out his orders, however, because he was unable to open the door of the box.

It was later reported that this door had stuck on account of paint; while another report was to the effect that a patrolman had broken the key to the alarm box with his "billy" when he attempted to turn in an alarm prior to the arrival of Hose 1. In any case, this box was not operated, but an alarm was later turned in from Box 563, Union and Water.

Engines 2 and 4 responded on this alarm, with Hose 5 and Truck 1. A second alarm five minutes later brought Engine 6 and Truck 3 to the scene, together with a spare hose car manned by the crew of Engine 1.

This latter arrangement was due to the fact that the Robinson engine, which had rendered such yeoman service at the Sherman stable fire, had broken its jack shaft shortly before the Union street conflagration. So this pumper, which had been a bone of contention ever since its purchase in 1913,

was relegated to the junk pile, and Engine 1 was assigned to Station 10 until a new pumper was secured.

Engine 1, manned by the crew of the late Robinson engine, had covered-in at Station 2 on the second alarm from whence it was ordered to the fire by telephone. A third alarm was sounded some 20 minutes after the second. Engine 3 and Hose 2 answered this call. No. 3 did not work at the main fire, but was sent to fight a roof fire on Water street.

The sky was brightly illuminated by the flames as they licked up the nest of wooden buildings between Union street and Barker's lane. Burning embers filled the air and caused many exposure fires.

An excellent exhibition of quick thinking was shown by the action of Engineer James J. Donaghy, and Captain Nicklas of Truck 2, who, while responding from the off-shift and before reporting for duty at the main fire wet down many of the roofs which were in the path of the clouds of blazing firebrands. This speedy action undoubtedly prevented the spread of the flames in this direction. Good work was also done by the crew of Engine 1 under Capt. Haskins, with its spare hose car, in this same neighborhood in checking the exposure fires which occurred after the preliminary wetting down.

The heat from the burning restaurant, and other nearby buildings, was so intense that some of the rubber coats of the firemen were melted. However, the men stuck to their task until the last spark was extinguished.

The flames could be seen from Fairhaven, and this town offered assistance, which was declined. New Bedford still had Engines 7 and 9, Hose 4 and Truck 2 in quarters after the third alarm had been sounded. There was also a spare ladder truck available, together with three steamers equipped with towing poles. With this reserve out-of-town help wasn't needed.

Two other large fires occurred in 1920. The Mayflower Baking Co., suffered a loss of $19,000 on January 2nd while the Potomska Mills sustained a loss of $65,000 on

April 3rd. These two fires were not so spectacular as the Union street blaze, nor did they cause so much concern.

On the morning of June 23, 1921 a serious fire had its origin in the paper baling shed of the Men's Mission on Second street, threatened the destruction of the lumber district on Water street, north of Middle, together with Blossom Brothers' planing mill and the E. E. Taylor shoe factory.

Three alarms were sounded for this blaze. The first was sent out by Lieut. James T. Wing, who was on duty in the signal room at "Fire Headquarters," when he received a telephone message that there was a fire at the Men's Mission. The second alarm was turned in by Engineer Frederick Ricketson upon his arrival on the scene of the blaze a few minutes later. Then a third alarm was sounded on orders from the acting chief, Engineer James Donaghy, who had responded on the second. This prompt action was an important factor in keeping the loss down to $35,000, for, with the five dwelling houses south and west of the burning baling shed and the roof of the adjacent three-story planing mill already involved when the first alarm was transmitted, any delay in sending in the extra alarms would undoubtedly have resulted in disaster.

The only slip-up on this highly exciting occasion was contributed by the reserve motor pumper, formerly Engine 9, which had taken the place of Hose 1 while the latter was in the repair shop. No. 9 had already stretched-in with a line on Second street when this piece was sent to lay another line on Acushnet avenue. This second line was stretched from the plug at the foot of Mill street on the avenue, but the hydrant wrench had been left on the first hydrant from which a line had been laid. Thus the firemen were unable to open the plug. The attempted use of a monkey wrench resulted in failure. In the meantime, however, Engine 4, responding on the second alarm, drew up at the same hydrant, therefore, this slip-up resulted only in allowing this engine free access to the plug.

The third-alarm apparatus was ordered to cover the exposure fires in the lumber district to the eastward. Engineer

Frank R. Pease was detailed to take charge of this section, and the blaze gained no headway.

Engineer James J. Donaghy was in charge of the fire in the absence of Chief Dahill, who was out of town. A letter of thanks was sent to the latter by the residents in the vicinity of the threatened conflagration for the good work of the firemen.

The Washington Club house, said to have been the finest structure of its kind in the country, was visited by a fire that destroyed all the upper portion of the building just after midnight on Sunday, Jan. 8, 1922.

The family of the club's janitor, who lived on the top floor, were forced to jump for their lives due to the rapid spread of the flames. Unfortunately the life net that was used in the rescue broke under the impact of the falling bodies. The wife and daughter of the janitor suffered bruises and other injuries which were treated at St. Luke's Hospital.

Two alarms were sounded from the box at Water and Cove streets, while all the third-alarm response and part of the fourth-alarm apparatus were ordered to the scene by telephone.

The second alarm was promptly ordered by Engineer James J. Donaghy, who was the first chief officer to arrive at the fire. However, the firemen detailed to this duty was unable to find the key to the inner compartment of the alarm box, from where the telegraph key that is used to notify "Headquarters" that a "legitimate" extra alarm is being transmitted, is located. So he was ordered to break the inner door open with an iron mallet in order to send in the second alarm without further delay. A sharp blow properly directed would have speedily accomplished this purpose with the resultant damage confined to the lock. But, the over-zealous fireman, forgetting the delicate mechanism within the box, went at it "hammer and tongs." If he had not been interrupted, he would undoubtedly have put all the fire alarm boxes on the same circuit out of commission. New Bedford's signal system is of the closed-circuit type, which means that a broken connection would

open the line, thereby preventing the further functioning of such a circuit until it could be closed by the repairing of the break.

The members of the crew of Hose 5 kicked their heels to keep warm while waiting for an engine to take the hydrant at the corner of Water and Division streets from where this hose company had been ordered to stretch a line. The wait was in vain, however, for no engine appeared. Engine 7 was later sent for, and upon the arrival of this pumper two lines were laid from a nearer hydrant by Hose 5 and No. 7, which were siamesed into a two-way deluge set. This heavy stream did good work from the roof of the four-story building next south of the clubhouse.

A leaky play pipe on one of No. 4's lines caused a great deal of discomfort and hardship to the firemen who held this line. The men were wet to the skin by the flying spray which quickly froze in the wintry air. However, this was all in the day's work, and the men kept at their task. When some of the firemen were relieved from duty several hours later, they found that their feet and legs had turned blue from the cold.

This was the first large fire to visit this section of the city since the Division street fire which occurred on July 19, 1909. Like this blaze, the club-house fire caused a great deal of concern to the people in the immediate vicinity. However, the snow on the roofs of the surrounding buildings prevented the spread of the flames from the air-charged firebrands.

The most costly fire to the city of New Bedford, as a municipality, was that which caused the total destruction of the garbage plant on June 22, 1922. The final cost to the city for this disastrous blaze, which resulted in two fatalities, will be about $200,000.

The first alarm was sounded from the private alarm box at the plant at 4.59 o'clock in the afternoon. A second alarm was ordered by Chief Dahill about 15 minutes later from Box 494, Rockdale avenue and Hathaway road. Engines 7 and 10, Hose 2 and 5, and Truck 2 responded to the first call. Engine 3 came on the second.

Engine 7 took the nearest hydrant to the burning plant, and laid two lines. Neither were effective owing to the inadequate water supply.

Engine 10 drafted water from the cooling pond close to the fire, but this supply was exhausted in a very few minutes. This engine was then sent back to Shawmut avenue where the nearest available hydrant was located, and it took 2000 feet of hose to reach the fire. Like No. 7, this other pumper was unable to deliver an effective stream. This was due in the latter case to the long run of hose, together with the inability of this pumper to deliver the requisite engine pressure due to the operation of the relief valve. No. 10 was well operated and in good condition. It could easily have delivered an engine pressure of 200 pounds if the relief valve had been so adjusted as to permit it. It was very unfortunate that the only person authorized to make the simple adjustment was busy elsewhere at the time of the emergency.

The fire caused considerable depletion in the city treasury. The first loss amounted to about $80,000. It will take about $100,000 to replace the burned structure. This, together with the present expensive emergency methods of garbage disposal, will bring the total cost up to approximately $200,000. So we see that fire loss, just as the fire preventionists claim, is a double loss.

When the new plant is erected, an adequate water main should be laid from Shawmut avenue to the building. Then a complete automatic sprinkler system should be installed with an automatically operated electric booster fire pump connected to the sprinkler pipes.

The month of March, 1924, proved to be an ill-fated period for fire waste in New Bedford, for the total loss for this month amounted to approximately $800,000. The New Bedford Anti-Tuberculosis Sanitorium, at Sassaquin, had a serious fire which practically destroyed the administration building, with a loss of $28,227.97 early in the morning of March 14th. Seven days later the Vocational School was visited with a fire that likewise damaged the administration building of this institution, with a loss of $11,450. Nine days later, on Sunday evening, March 30th,

the Wamsutta Mills, the oldest cotton manufacturing plant in New Bedford, was visited with the most disastrous blaze in the history of the city, when a loss of $742,419 was sustained.

The fire at Sassaquin was discovered at 5.20 A. M., and was fought with hand extinguishers at first. However, little headway was made against the flames, and an alarm was turned in from Box 38. This brought Engines 9 and 10, with Hose 2, to the scene. Then, after a delay, Engine 7, Hose 1 and Truck 4 were called to the scene by telephone.

When the seriousness of the fire became apparent, a fireman was detailed to send in a telephone call from Box 38 for second-alarm apparatus. The necessary equipment that would enable telephone communication with "Headquarters" had not been installed in the alarm boxes north of Lunds Corner. Hence the fireman was unable to put in such a call from Box 38. When he discovered this predicament, the fireman got into the chief's car and drove to Station 9 at Lunds Corner, where he sent in a telephone call for second-alarm apparatus.

After a fight of three hours the flames were extinguished. The greatest personal loss was suffered by William B. Geohegan, President of the Anti-Tuberculosis Association, when his library was destroyed by the flames as they swept through the room in the administration building where his books were kept.

The wooden building was later replaced by a brick structure.

The fire at the Vocational School on the evening of March 21st, was burning with such magnitude when Deputy Chief James J. Donaghy arrived that he turned in a second alarm without delay. This prompt action was undoubtedly an important factor in keeping the damage down to $11,454.

It was a spectacular blaze to watch as the roof of the administration building burned off, with firebrands falling all around. Several houses to the southwest of the school suffered from exposure fires.

Then came the Wamsutta Mills fire which proved to be the most serious blaze from a monetary standpoint of any

fire in the history of New Bedford. The total loss, including water damage, amounted to $742,419.

The blaze was first discovered by one of the watchmen of the plant, and an alarm was turned in from the company's private box by another watchman. Engines 1, 2, 7 and 10; Hose 1 and 5, with Trucks 1 and 2 responded. The firemen found the spinning room of No. 2 mill all ablaze. The flames quickly worked their way up to the blind attic above where the asbestos shingles on the roof confined the blaze to the interior of the building for some time. This lack of ventilation greatly handicapped the firemen, and four hosemen, all of Engine 1, were overcome from the dense clouds of smoke as they tried to fight the flames in this part of the burning plant. These four hosemen, Albert Audette, Alfred Normandin, William F. Mannion, and George T. Davis, were revived and able to continue work.

After the fire had been in progress for some time, without much headway being made against the flames, Chief Dahill ordered four additional pieces of apparatus to the scene by telephone. One of these pieces, Engine 4, broke a spring while crossing the railroad tracks in North Front street, and was put out of commission. The crew went on to the fire and was assigned to other companies.

Information was received in South Dartmouth that a serious fire was in progress in New Bedford, when the Wamsutta blaze was at its height, and this town offered the services of its Fire Department to our department. The offer was declined, but the neighborly firemen were asked to stand by. This was done, and the men remained in their station in Padanaram until the relief was sounded at 12.22 A. M. Monday.

During the mill fire an alarm came in from a north end box. This was followed by an alarm from a south end school box. "Headquarters" endeavored to get in touch by telephone with Chief Dahill when these alarms came in. No one answered the telephone in the mill office, however, and the aid of the Police Department was invoked. Lieut. Moore, who was alone in Police Station No. 5 received orders to close this station and proceed to the fire with a message

asking the head of the Fire Department to call "Headquarters." This unique order was carried out.

Apropos of Dartmouth's offer of assistance on this occasion, a subsequent editorial in "The Standard" urged that an arrangement between the Fire Departments of New Bedford, Acushnet, Dartmouth and Fairhaven be made, whereby quick response could be planned for future emergencies of similar nature in any of these communities. Such an agreement is in force in the Metropolitan district of Boston. So, too, is it in effect in the city of Lynn and vicinity; also Lawrence and nearby towns. This reciprocal scheme for response to a neighbor's pressing need has been found of great benefit in practice in those communities having such an agreement.

The city of New Bedford was visited with one of the most destructive fires, and probably the most unusual in its history, late in the evening of June 30, when the steamer Sankaty and the steamboat dock were destroyed. The total loss amounted to $325,000.

The blaze had its origin in some bales of hay which were on the Vineyard wharf awaiting shipment to the island ports. This hay had been taken from a freight car that had already been in a fire earlier in the day on a nearby side track. When the hay was transferred to the steamboat dock, it was placed alongside 15 barrels of kerosene. Thus the stage was all set for the resultant disastrous fire. Whether or not the blaze started from spontaneous combustion or a smoldering ember in the hay from the earlier blaze in the freight car, it certainly wrought rapid destruction of the Vineyard wharf, and the Sankaty.

Indeed, the flames spread with such rapidity that Captain Sylvia and several members of the steamer were forced to jump overboard and swim ashore in order to escape the onrush of the fire.

In answer to a telephone call, Hose 1 and Deputy Chief James J. Donaghy were ordered to the scene. Then, a bell alarm was turned in from the private box on the adjacent wharf. By the time that the first-alarm apparatus had arrived, wharf sheds, freight cars, office building, and train

shed were involved in the flames, while the Sankaty was blazing from stem to stern.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this spectacular fire, aside from the rapid spread of the flames, was the destruction of this vessel and its voyage across the Acushnet River. After burning for nearly an hour at her dock, the ebb tide carried the Sankaty out into the stream as her moorings burned through. She made a weird, phantom-like picture as she floated away, blazing like a giant crimson poppy—without crew or passengers;—piloted by the wind and tide. Pausing for a moment when she reached mid-stream, she swung broadside, then, as an oil tank exploded on board, the freshening breeze carried her across the river toward Union Wharf in Fairhaven.

The whaling bark Charles W. Morgan, the oldest whaler then afloat, was tied up at this dock, when the Sankaty, still burning with fierce intensity, brought up alongside the historic whaling vessel.

However, the Fairhaven Fire Department was ready and waiting to turn several streams on the blazing steamer, and this preparedness enabled the Morgan to escape with only a slight scorching. The Sankaty soon sank under the deluge of streams from Fairhaven's new motor pumper, aided by a line from the tug-boat John Duff.

The Fairhaven pumper was handicapped by the mud in the river at low tide. However, this piece was able to deliver several efficient streams on the blaze.

Hose 1, which responded on the "still" alarm, stretched-in with a big line from the hydrant at the corner of School and Front streets just as the bell alarm began to sound. This company had begun to work on the dock fire when Engine 1, coming on the first alarm, attempted to take Hose 1's hydrant, but knocked it over instead, thereby putting the hose company's line out of action for the time being. Engine 1 laid several shorts of hose from the plug at the corner of School and Water streets to piece out the other line. This engine then began to pump through the combined line at an engine pressure of 80 pounds. This run of hose was about six hundred feet in length.

In the meantime, Engine 2, operated by "Ben" Groves, stretched-in with two lines, while Hose 5 also laid a line from this pumper. Though Engine 2 was called upon to pump through a lay-out of hose consisting of three lines, nevertheless, she delivered the banner performance at this fire. An engine pressure of 150 pounds was maintained by this pumper, which meant that she delivered over 900 gallons per minute.

The other engine to respond on the first alarm was Engine 4. This piece had two lines out, about 450 feet each, and maintained an engine pressure of 80 pounds.

Engines 3 and 6 answered the second alarm, which was sounded about 15 minutes after the first. The first pumper drafted salt water from the New England Steamship dock, while No. 6 put down to draft on Merrill's wharf. No. 3 delivered two streams at an engine pressure of 100 pounds. No. 6 ran at 80 pounds, with the same number of lines.

Trucks 1 and 3 also were on the job. The first piece coming on the original bell alarm, while the latter truck came on the second. In all there were five pumpers, two hose companies and two truck companies at work on the New Bedford side of the fire. These, with three companies of the Fairhaven department, made a total of 12 companies.

Many thousands of spectators were attracted to the scene, and crowded Merrill's wharf, the Fairhaven bridge, and other points of vantage. After the Sankaty drifted away, there was not much left for the New Bedord department to do except to play on the smoldering coal shed of the Vineyard line.

CHAPTER VIII

The New Bedford Protecting Society, which was organized on October 26, 1829, with a membership of 50 men, is the oldest part of our Fire Department. This society was also the first organization of its kind in the United States. Moreover, if it was not the first salvage corps to be established in the world, it, at least, was one of the pioneers.

The original society as organized in 1829 was headed by the following officers:

President — James Hathaway
Vice-President — George Randall
Secretary and Treasurer — James Cannon
Directors — Zacheous Cushman, Joseph H. Allen, William T. Hawes, Robert Bennett, and Alfred Gibbs.

The members of this society were paid an annual salary of two dollars. This sum, notwithstanding the increased cost of living, is still the rate. However, exemption from jury duty is counted a valuable asset by the members.

The first and last banquet of the Protecting Society occurred at the Parker House on January 29, 1885. The following bill of fare would seem to indicate that it was a sumptuous affair:

Oyster Soup

Baked Codfish Port Wine Sauce

Turkey; Oyster Sauce; Chickens and Pork; Ham and Tongue

* * *

Escalloped Oysters

Macaroni au Parmesan

Lobster Salad

Stewed Oysters

Rice Croquettes

Chicken Salad

* * *

Leg Venison, Current Jelly
Mongrel Goose, Apple Jelly
Caprons, Cranberry Jelly

* * *

Roast Turkey Roast Duck Roast Chicken
Ham, Champagne Sauce
Partridge Black Duck Squab Teal Grouse
Woodcock Quail Canvas Back Duck

* * *

Apple Mince Lemon Squash Pies

* * *

Floating Islands Wine Jelly Blanc Mange
Calves' Foot Jelly Porcupines
Charlotte Russe Italian Ice Cream

* * *

Apples Raisins Oranges Almonds Figs
Shagbarks Coffee Cigars

At five dollars per plate it is not surprising that the treasury of the society was cleaned out by this banquet. There is no record of what it did to the stomachs of the members.

Two young merchants at the feast felt the need of a stimulus after their appetites had been satiated, and ordered a "cold bottle" on their own responsibility. When the said bottle appeared at the banquet table, it took the sound of the resonant pop, when the cork was removed, to convince the other diners that something extra had been started. Soon corks were popping in all directions, and all had a gala time during the rest of the evening. When the instigators of the wet treat went to settle for their "cold bottle" at the office, they were informed that the numerous repeat orders which followed the original had balanced accounts; and, moreover, the two were offered another bottle, gratis, if desired.

The first member of the New Bedford Fire Department to die of injuries received while working at a fire was the late Henry C. Kelly, who was vice-president of the Protecting Society at the time. Mr. Kelly received his fatal injuries when the roof of the Tabor building on Water street, near Union, fell in without warning while he was removing goods from the burning building at four o'clock in the morning of

October 24, 1862. He died 15 days later after suffering a great deal of pain. Members of the society watched at his bedside during this trying period, and also performed many acts of kindness for him.

Politics became mixed up with the Protecting Society in 1877, when the City Council, at the instance of the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department, reduced the number of members of the organization. The Chief Engineer in question failed of re-election the next year.

In 1884 the society was increased by 25 additional members. In this year the Chief Engineer said in his annual report:

"The members of the New Bedford Protecting Society have been very prompt to respond to all alarms, and I cannot speak too highly in praise of the faithful manner in which they have performed their duties. There has been more work than for a number of years and they have saved many thousands of dollars worth of property, especially at the residence of E. D. Mandell and at the store of Haskell & Tripp.

While the regular work of the Protecting Society was the salvaging of property in danger of destruction from fire, on one occasion this organization rendered a signal service that was out of the regular line of duty. This incident occurred at the memorable Kirby Paint Factory Fire on the evening of April 1, 1887. At this three-alarm blaze, "Onward No. 1," the first engine to arrive on the scene, found her position untenable on account of the rapid spread of the flames. The buildings on either side of the steamer were soon ablaze, and this apparatus was severely scorched. However, energetic work on the part of members of the Protecting Society enabled them to save No. 1 from destruction.

The writer, then a small boy at the time, witnessed another act on the part of members of the Protecting Society that was out of the regular line of duty. It was on the day of the $40,000 fire in the cotton shed belonging to the Bennett Mills on September 19, 1896. While the firemen were putting the finishing touches to extinguishing the flames, the sky suddenly became overcast with clouds. The wind began to increase. Soon it was blowing a gale.

The writer had started for home at the beginning of the storm, but was forced to take refuge under an awning on Acushnet avenue, near Coggeshall street. As the wind reached hurricane proportions there was a resounding crash. A nearly completed combination store and apartment house at the corner of Coggeshall and North Front streets had been leveled to the ground by the sharp gusts of wind. As the wrecked building came down it struck the rear end of a wagon in which Charles S. Kelly, President of the Protecting Society, and Alfred Thornton, a director in the same organization, together with Mr. Kelley's son were returning home from the cotton shed fire.

Notwithstanding the narrow escape which these three had, upon learning that a man had been caught under the storm-razed structure, they quickly set to work to help extricate the unfortunate victim. When the latter was taken out of the ruins he was rushed to the Weld street Police Station in the wagon in which his rescuers had been riding. He died a few hours later.

Several others were trapped under the fallen building. It was not until late in the afternoon of that fatal day that the last victim was recovered. The structure was cut to pieces by members of the Police Department in order to get at the victims pinned beneath the wreckage. The owner of the building later entered suit against the city for the destruction of his property by the rescuing parties. When the building was rebuilt it was named "Cyclone Block."

In that same year, Henry S. Hutchinson, a member of the society, rescued an elderly woman from a burning building on Kempton street, east of Cedar, for which two alarms had been sounded. The woman refused to leave the building at first, but Mr. Hutchinson insisted on her going, and he was able to get her out by half carrying her down the stairway that was filled with smoke.

At midnight on November 11, 1898, President Charles S. Kelley and Alfred Thornton of the Protecting Society, aided by Engineer Loring T. Parlow and Hoseman Frank Lewis, now captain of Engine 6, rescued four persons from a smoke-filled tenement on Beetle street in the north part of the city.

It was necessary to force the door to the apartment. Crawling on their hands and knees, the rescuing party of four men were able to reach those who had been trapped by the onrush of the flames. First aid was given the victims, and all were revived except a small baby. Director John H. Lowe was the first to discover the plight of the persons whose escape had been cut off by the blaze.

The excellent work done by the Protecting Society in saving the fire alarm signal system from injury when City Hall was visited with fire at the time of the municipal election recount in 1906, indicates the great worth of a salvage corps to the city. The signal apparatus was housed in the basement of this historic building, and by the use of a large number of water-proof blankets all the delicate equipment was saved from harm. Much other city property was also protected by the society at this fire.

President Charles S. Kelley, after a service of 37 years, 26 of which he served as the head of the Protecting Society, resigned from his office in 1907. During his many years of activity, Mr. Kelley secured a contribution towards the purchase of an adequate number of water-proof coverings from several fire insurance companies. These coverings were first used in 1883.

Several changes which made for greater efficiency, were inaugurated during his tenure of office. In 1885 the members of the society were assigned to respond to fires in certain districts, just as other branches of the Fire Department were doing. The membership was increased from 50 to 75 during his presidency.

Mr. Kelley was presented with a silver loving cup, together with a set of resolutions of the society's appreciation of his service to the organization when he retired.

At the time of Mr. Kelley's retirement in 1907 the Protecting Society had been in existence for 78 years. It was estimated that $1,000,000 worth of property had been saved from destruction by this organization during these years.

So, it can readily be seen that this society has been a very worth-while part of our Fire Department. However, it is unable to function effectively these days on account of the lack of knowledge of first-alarm fires, except the rare calls from private boxes, which are transmitted on the slow-time service. Therefore, a permanent salvage corps is now essential to the needs of the city if a full measure of protection is to be afforded New Bedford.

CHAPTER IX

The New Bedford Veteran Fireman's Association was organized on Monday evening, November 10, 1890, for the purpose of collecting and preserving records, relics, and papers relating to the New Bedford Fire Department. The first officers of the association were the following:

President — Charles S. Kelley

Vice-Presidents — Frederick Macy and James Delano

Secretary — William G. Kirschbaum

Treasurer — Haile R. Luther

Directors — Samuel C. Hart, Leonard B. Ellis, Haile R. Luther, and William G. Kirschbaum.

This association carried out its purpose so well that a most effective link between the New Bedford Fire Department of the past and the department of the present has been established. Hand Engine Columbian No. 5, together with a rare and extensive collection of relics forms this link.

The relic of chief interest, of course, is Columbian No. 5, once the pride of the New Bedford Fire Department. Then there is a working model of "Young Mechanic No. 6," which was made by Samuel S. Benjamin, an old time fireman. Another interesting model is that of Truck 1; the first aerial hook and ladder to go into commission in this city. The original truck was put in service on August 30, 1888. The model was made by the permanent men of the central fire station, which at that time was located on Purchase street, corner of Mechanics Lane. George S. Allen and Charles Vining did much of the work.

Now that all our ladder trucks have been motorized, this model of the first horse-drawn aerial truck becomes of interest from an historical as well as a sentimental point of view.

The first steam fire engine to go into commission in New Bedford was "Onward No. 1," and the association has the

name plate of this historic piece as an interesting relic of those early days.

The numerous pictures in the hall of the association also portray an interesting study of the past. These consist of several Boards of Fire Engineers, the captains of the department in 1890, and photographs of various steamers and crews.

An especially interesting group of pictures entitled "The Life of a Fireman," was presented to the association by former Mayor Tobin of Newport, R. I. This gift was the result of a visit to the quarters of the organization where Mayor Tobin was very much impressed by the extensiveness of the Veteran Firemen's collection. These pictures not only depict the life of a fireman in the early days, but the evolution of fire apparatus is also shown from the hand-drawn hand-engine to the horse-drawn steamer.

Among the group of steamer pictures, "Progress No. 2," with crew of 1878, "Excelsior No. 3," "Cornelius Howland No. 4," "Frederick Macy No. 6" and the second "Onward No. 1," are represented.

Another relic, which bears silent testimony to the heroism of firemen, a broken pole from "Progress No. 2," was presented to the Veteran Firemen's Association by former Chief Engineer Macy.

This pole was broken while No. 2 was responding to an alarm of fire from Box 39 Acushnet avenue and Cannon street, on June 24, 1894. A man, just in from the country, was driving a load of wood up Union street, directly in the path of the onrushing steamer. Without an instant of hesitation, William P. Sowle, who was driving the fire engine horses, turned sharply to one side. As he did so the forward wheels of the steamer caught in the car tracks, and the pole was snapped off; while Driver Sowle was hurled to the ground. He was instantly killed as the wheels of the engine passed over him. Mr. Sowle was taken to his home in the new police ambulance, which was used for the first time since going into commission a few days prior to the accident.

In the meanwhile another pole was obtained for the steamer, and Benjamin C. Groves, the engineer, drove the apparatus to the fire.

So the New Bedford Veteran Firemen's Association, with its extensive collection of relics and pictures, together with a large number of members interested in its purpose, comprises a genuine connecting link between the early days of fire-fighting and the present.

The following is the list of officers and members of the organization:

Members of the N. B. V. F. A. January 1st, 1926.

President—G. A. Wood, Jr.

1st Vice-Pres.—P. Anthony

2nd Vice-Pres.—J. Coster

Treas.—J. A. W. Burgess

Fin. Sec.—J. H. Bryant

Rec. Sec.—G. C. Hewins

Foreman—E. A. A. Krebs

1st Assistant Foreman—A. Sylvaria

2nd Assistant Foreman—H. Pittsley

Directors—

H. S. Chase, R. H. Bliss, O. J. Dowd, J. J. Miller

League Delegates—W. S. Mortin, E. A. A. Krebs

Chaplain—H. S. Chase

Steward—W. F. Wilcox

G. H. H. Allen	F. A. Blossom	A. M. Bessette
I. R. Allen	A. P. Bochman	H. W. Bliss
H. P. Arnold	J. B. Bradford	G. W. Brown
C. S. Ashley	A. J. Brooks	A. R. Bacon
A. J. Abram	U. G. Brownell	E. E. Baudoin
L. H. Almy	J. I. Bryant	A. J. Bettencourt
J. L. Almond	H. L. Burding	J. Bedard
H. V. Ackerman	R. F. Burke	W. L. Barrows
F. A. Brand	A. H. Borden	W. C. Borden
T. A. Benson	G. A. Brown	H. R. Brownell
A. Berry	M. Baptiste	R. N. Bertram

F. C. Clark
F. E. Cleveland
D. H. Cook
F. H. Cooke
W. C. Coon
J. W. Croacher
E. Cross
L. Cotnoir
A. P. Chace
F. E. Clarke
T. Cote, Jr.
H. W. Crapo
G. A. Clarkson
W. P. Coggeshall
J. Campos
W. O. Clark
H. S. Cameron
H. A. Chace
J. Costa
G. D. Daudelin
J. W. Donaghy
J. J. Donaghy
E. F. Dahill
A. P. Doyle
W. Douglass
H. A. Dowd
W. L. Davis
W. A. Duclois
W. Earnshaw
G. A. L. Ethier
J. Ellis
T. F. Flood
C. Francis
W. Fonaciari
J. Fortake
F. Fenestermaker
W. J. Gibbs, Jr.

E. H. Gifford
E. S. Gilkey
W. Gordon
H. C. Gibbs
P. Garrity
W. A. Gatenby
P. A. Gaudette
E. B. Hammond
C. R. Hathaway
C. I. Higgins
F. G. Hillman
Dr. C. R. Hunt
O. S. Hammond
J. J. Howland
E. H. Hegarty
H. J. Hodgon, Jr.
A. B. Harriss
P. Hebert
E. C. Henry
F. T. Hammond
E. R. Hathaway
L. L. Harrington
S. Julio
A. F. James
E. B. Johnson
C. S. Kelley
H. H. Kimball
G. Klemm
J. Kelley
H. A. Lawson
W. A. Lenhart
A. Little
J. H. Lawrence
A. LaPlante
W. C. T. Lewis
R. A. Lothiam
W. J. Lawrence

C. E. Marshall
S. T. Miller
L. E. Milliken
J. T. Miller
T. E. Mack
B. F. Michelsen
C. T. Maxfield
C. W. Maguire
O. W. Melzer
F. P. Mosher
C. N. Mosher
A. S. Martin
O. E. Mosher
J. E. McDonal
C. H. McCarthy
J. McDonnell
I. W. Nelson
G. E. Nye
S. E. Nickerson
J. J. O'Brien
P. O'Brien
H. I. Omstead
W. S. Osgood, Jr
J. S. O'Brien
E. R. O'Brien
J. T. O'Brien
E. J. O'Brien
J. A. Perkins
W. A. Perry
J. E. Pidgeon
E. E. Pollock
O. Pineau
A. L. Phillips
H. D. Peckham
J. Phelan
R. Phelan
J. M. Perry

H. L. S. Perry
P. A. Rainville
G. P. Read, Jr.
J. E. Rebello
H. C. Reynolds
F. P. Rose
E. A. Regan
A. J. Rose
A. E. Ricketson
C. A. Russell
W. Rossi
G. H. Reynolds
E. Richards
W. F. Randall
G. Rusitsky
W. H. Riley
F. L. Reed
E. L. Reese
E. Robinson
W. Sellick
F. B. Sistaire
T. J. Summers
M. A. Sylvia
A. C. Smith
C. L. Soule
J. W. Sayles
J. F. Santos
F. A. Shurtleff
C. W. Smith
W. J. Small
A. St. Jean
J. Sanderson
M. Swain
C. A. Sylvia
H. Scheff
C. W. Such
A. A. Sylvia
J. R. Souza
P. G. Thomson
C. W. Vining, Jr.
C. A. Vaill
A. P. Voisine
A. M. Varney
A. C. Wheaton
S. L. Wilber
J. Willey
W. S. Wills
E. E. Wallace
R. K. Winslow
W. Witkoe
Rev. H. B. Williams
R. Williams

CHAPTER X

An adequate water supply is, of course, of paramount importance in effective fire fighting. So, hand-in-hand with the "Story of the New Bedford Fire Department" goes the story of the development of our water system from the standpoint of fire protection.

The first attempt to furnish this community with a water supply was made in 1803, when "The First Aqueduct Association," was formed in Bedford Village, under an act of Legislature. The name of this organization was changed when it was incorporated a year later to the "First Bedford Aqueduct Association." The capital stock was limited to 50 shares; while the equipment was crude and inadequate. It consisted of a fountain as the sole source of supply, with a distributing system of log pipes.

About one year after the incorporation of this organization a fire occurred in a dwelling house in the village, but there was no available means of getting water with which to fight the blaze. In the light of this occurrence the Columbia Courier, issue of July 4, 1805, in an editorial, urged that the selectmen consider the proposition of having fire hydrants installed and connected to the log-pipe system. The Courier said:

"As one means of obtaining a plentiful supply of water in case of fire, we would respectfully suggest to the selectmen the propriety of placing conductors at the proper distances from each other in the pipes of the First Bedford Aqueduct Corporation. This measure is authorized by an act of this State respecting aqueducts."

There is no record of whether or not this suggestion bore fruit. Some years later, however, fire reservoirs, fed by springs, wells and rainwater, were constructed at strategic points for the use of the Volunteer Fire Department. These reservoirs were unable to supply the demands of a large fire

however, and they were usually exhausted in a short time whenever the firemen had a big fight on their hands.

The reservoir that was located in City Hall Square, which had been dug on Cheapside in 1885, during the time that Joshua B. Ashley was Chief Engineer of the Fire Department, was claimed by many to be able to furnish an inexhaustible amount of water for fire fighting.

Speaking of the water supply from this reservoir, the late Robert C. P. Coggeshall, in a paper prepared for the Old Dartmouth Historical Society in 1915, says, "It was completely exhausted in the fiercest portion of the great fire of April 1859, (W. A. Nash's carriage factory in Mechanic Lane, the Public Library, and other buildings) and in 1909 when abandoned and filled up, prior to the placing of the foundation of the stack room of the Public Library, it was pumped dry in less than an hour."

In the same paper, Mr. Coggeshall says, "The reservoir on Purchase street, south of Union, constructed by Mr. Ashley to replace the "fountain lot reservoir," was abandoned and partially filled up about the time of the erection of the Institution for Savings building. This filling was completed about a month ago with the relaying of the electric car tracks in Purchase street. Thus all traces of the water course, which at one time was the feature of the town and village, have now vanished."

It was not until shortly before the Civil War that an agitation for a public supply of water was started. One of the leading citizens of the community who was in favor of the project, William W. Crapo, was often called "Water Works Crapo" by those who were opposed to this progressive measure.

An ordinance was passed by the City Council on November 30, 1865, "to regulate the proceedings of the commission for supplying the city of New Bedford with pure water."

William W. Crapo, Warren Ladd and David B. Kempton were the first men chosen to serve under the official title of "The New Bedford Water Commissioners." This board was organized on December 13, 1865, with Mr. Crapo as

chairman. James B. Congdon was appointed clerk while George A. Briggs was made chief engineer, and William J. McAlpine consulting engineer.

On November 25, 1869, just four years later, water began to flow through the mains of the new distributing system. An interesting, as well as highly satisfactory, test of the newly installed fire hydrants was made on Purchase street between Union and Elm streets on the afternoon of that day.

The city of New Bedford had a population of 21,320 in 1870. At that time there were 17 miles of distributing mains in operation, with an average daily consumption of 329,375 gallons of water. Today, in the year of 1926, with a population somewhat in the vicinity of 130,000, there are over 200 miles of distributing mains in our Water Works System, while our daily average consumption is now 10,500,000 gallons.

In providing this extensive distributing system for New Bedford, the engineers had in mind the fact that our fire protection needs would often demand a large amount of water at one point, with no telling before hand when or where that call might come. So, in order to be able to meet such a demand, the New Bedford Water Works system has been so designed that an ample amount of water may be concentrated at any particular point, when needed.

As an illustration of the approximate maximum volume of water that would be needed at any given point if all our motor pumpers were in use, it is interesting to note that the full rated capacity of the eight pumping units of our Fire Department total 5600 gallons per minute. This, then, would be the amount of water that our Water Works would have to be prepared to deliver at such a point if all our fire engines were concentrated at one fire.

Hence, in order to be equal to such an emergency, our water system has been made 50 per cent more extensive than otherwise would be needed. Moreover, one of the chief contributing factors in bringing about the construction of the "Further Supply," or present system, was the imperative need for higher pressures for fire protection purposes, which was due to the rapid development of the city.

From the foregoing then, we learn that there was a demand for a water supply for fire protection purposes as early as 1805. Then follows a truly remarkable development from the primitive "First Bedford Aqueduct Association," with its meager equipment, through the period of inadequate fire reservoirs, which were surplanted by the "Acushnet' 'supply in 1899, with its amber-colored water and unpleasant taste, down to the present extensive and fully adequate system, with its excellent quality of water.

Since we are considering our water supply from the standpoint of fire protection, it will be pertinent to learn how well New Bedford has builded in the judgment of impartial experts.

In response to a request from the New Bedford Board of Commerce for a survey of the fire protection facilities of this city in 1921, The National Board of Fire Underwriters sent a field party of four highly trained fire prevention engineers to make a thorough examination of local conditions to see if a reduction in fire insurance rates was warranted. The survey was made during the months of August and September of that year, and it included a critical examination of our water supply, which is of primary importance in fire fighting.

Following this exhaustive test the New Bedford Water Works system, under The Standard Schedule, was charged with but 31 points of deficiency out of a possible 1700. So, when we consider that our water supply has been very critically studied in respect to its sources, its reservoirs, fire flow, pressures, size and arrangement of distributing mains, the position of hydrants and many other essential matters, by engineers trained in water works practices, and yet be able to attain an efficiency mark of 98.2 per cent, then we have proof positive that New Bedford has builded well in this important development.

Although the ability of the present water system to furnish the full rated capacity of our fire engines has never been tested by the concentration of all of the Fire Department at any one point, nevertheless, the physical test that was carried

out in the yard of the Manomet Mills on Saturday afternoon, June 5, 1915, demonstrated beyond any doubt that our public water supply would be equal to such a demand.

This test, which was made by engineers from the Associated Factory Mutual Fire Insurance Companies, aided by the officials of the local Water Works Department, was witnessed by a large number of fire protection engineers and inspectors.

The fire protection systems of the Manomet, Nashawena, Nonquitt and Whitman mills, which are connected with each other by means of 10-inch and 12-inch mains, may also be combined with our public system in times of emergencies. There are six 1000-gallon and four 1500-gallon Underwriter fire pumps attached to the private systems of these mills. The total combined volume of water which these pumps are capable of delivering per minute, 12,000 gallons, is more than double the total combined capacity of the eight motor pumpers in service at the present time in our Fire Department.

The ability of the 10 mill pumps to take suction from the Acushnet river was first tested. Two 2-inch streams and forty-one standard 1⅛-inch streams were concentrated in the Manomet mill yard. These lines were maintained by an average hydrant pressure of 85 pounds, which meant the delivery of 13,000 gallons of salt water per minute.

After this test the city supply was combined with the suction supply, and a total of 15,000 gallons per minute was delivered through thirty-four 1¾-inch streams.

Then came the test of the city supply alone. Over 5000 gallons of water per minute were sent through 12 1⅛-inch streams at an average hydrant pressure of 70 pounds. At no time during this test were the pumps run at a high rate of speed. Indeed, in several instances the pumps were run below normal speed, yet they were able to displace 5,000 gallons of our city supply of water per minute. This large drain was easily met by the public mains, which registered a drop of only 10 pounds in the city pressure when the test was at its height.

In the light of this physical test, we find that the opinion of impartial experts was confirmed, namely, that the city of

New Bedford builded well when she constructed her public water system. Moreover, our system, from the fire protection standpoint, enjoys first place among all the public water supplies of our nation. This assertion is not based upon local pride, but rather upon the critical findings of experts!

It is interesting to note that the fire pumps used in the north end mill test are known as Underwriters' pumps. They embody practically every known improvement making for durability and instant operation. This type of pump forms an important part of the private fire protection equipment of every one of our large industrial plants. These apparatus depend upon steam or electricity for motive power.

Since these private systems have two sources of supplies, a primary and a secondary, the former being connected to our public system, and the latter depending upon salt water drafted from the Acushnet, it has been necessary to install check valves between these two supplies. However, in the early days of the city, these check valves were of a less reliable type than the present and thereby hangs a tale:

At a mill fire in the south end a number of years ago, "Progress No. 2" suddenly failed to show water in the gage glass of the boiler. Benjamin C. Groves, engineer in charge of this steamer, tried the pet cocks and what little water that he was able to get had a salty taste. Presently there was a roaring, hissing sound as the boiler foamed over. All but a small rim of fire was extinguished under the boiler. "Frederick Macy No. 6", which was pumping from a nearby hydrant had a similar experience a few moments later. Both engines were obliged to shut down.

An investigation disclosed the fact that the check valve between the yard mains and the city supply failed to function properly. Consequently when the large Underwriters' pump was started by the mill engineer, the failure of the check valve permitted the salt water that was being drafted from the river to enter the city mains. This caused the foaming in the boilers of the fire engines,—also some very uneasy moments for the engineers who were operating these steamers.

The salt water likewise invaded the small service pipes on that occasion. This was strikingly shown by the salt-

water-coffee that a kind-hearted woman inadvertently made for the refreshment of the firemen.

Since that experience two positive closing, bronze mounted, check valves have been installed in each main depending upon salt water for a secondary supply.

Another improvement in the interest of better fire protection for New Bedford has been the adoption of a type of hydrant that is equipped with a controlling valve that opens downward. In the event of a collision with an automobile, if the barrel of the hydrant should be snapped off the water pressure would force the valve upward to its seat, thereby preventing a geyser-like leak so common with the other type.

The most signal improvement in recent years to our water system was the installation of an additional intake conduit at the pumping station on Little Quittacas Pond in 1923 and 1924. Few citizens realize what a major undertaking this project was. However, it cost $206,773 to carry out this new work, which required over 1200 feet of 60-inch precast concrete pipe.

This new intake was installed because of the risk of stoppage by ice of the original connection between the pumping station and the source of supply, together with the fact that a crack had developed in the old conduit which would probably have necessitated the shutting down of the pumps for so long a period while repairs were being effected that our water supply for both domestic and fire protection needs would have been seriously endangered.

This important project was under the general direction of Mr. Taylor, and was successfully accomplished without mishap.

An act of the General Court, which was approved on May 24, 1924, provides for the extension of our water supply, and also for that of the cities of Fall River and Taunton and surrounding towns. According to the estimate of growth of these communities made by X. H. Goodnough, Chief Engineer of the State Department of Public Health, this enlarged water supply should take care of the full needs of Southeastern Massachusetts until 1960.

Therefore, from all this we find that there has been, and still is, a constant alertness on the part of our Water Works Commissioners and other officials to give New Bedford the maximum efficiency along fire protection lines, as well as for the other indispensable needs of a water supply.

To the vision and courage of the original board of Water Commissioners, headed by William W. Crapo; to the able men who continued the work so well begun; to the several capable superintendents and their staffs, and to the co-operation of the municipal government, New Bedford owes her present efficient and outstanding Water Works system.

The active and effective supervision of our water supply during the period of its most rapid growth, by the late Robert C. P. Coggeshall, furnishes one of the high lights in the development of our Water Works.

Our present superintendent, Stephen A. Taylor, who succeeded Mr. Coggeshall, has proved a happy choice. Mr. Taylor was originally with the Water Department in 1889. In 1906 he became an inspector for the Factory Mutual Fire Insurance Company and his duties took him to all parts of the country inspecting Water Works systems. He returned to New Bedford in 1919 as assistant superintendent of our water system. Under Mr. Taylor's direction the high standard set by his predecessor has been maintained.

A list of the personnel making up the staff of the New Bedford Water Works Department will give some idea of the amount of work involved in giving our city the outstanding water system in America:

NEW BEDFORD WATER BOARD

Hon. Charles S. Ashley—
Mayor and President of Water Board
Austin Fowler—*President of Common Council*
Thomas F. Glennon James O. Thompson
Abbott P. Smith

Stephen H. Taylor—*Clerk of Water Board and Supt.*
Elson T. Killam—*Sanitary Engineer*
Alfred Bradley—*Water Registrar*
E. Maude Butts—*Clerk*
Dorothy Altman—*Stenographer*
Elsie W. Marvel—*Stenographer*
Warren Tattersall—*Water Registrar's Clerk*
Frank M. Hamlin—*Water Registrar's Clerk*
Lester F. Spooner—*Water Registrar's Clerk*
Randall S. Coe—*Water Registrar's Clerk*

PUMPING STATION

George F. Burgess—*Chief Engineer*
James H. Weeks—*Assistant Chief Engineer*
Walter A. Plummer—*Engineer*
Franklin V. Birdsall—*Engineer*
Everett A. Bradley—*Engineer*
Everett A. White—*Machinist*
John Yanak—*Machinist*
Edwin F. Drown—*Fireman*
John S. Ashley—*Fireman*
George C. DeMoranville—*Fireman*
Edward Fisher—*Fireman*
Arthur Paul—*Supervisor of Watershed and Grounds*

John C. DeMello, Jr.--*Foreman, Distributing System*
Herbert C. Gifford—*Assistant General Foreman*
Edward W. Bragg—*Blacksmith*
Allen G. Briggs—*Mechanic*
Frank J. Raphael—*Carpenter*
Joaquin F. Olivera—*Plumber*

INSPECTORS

Arthur F. Colwell	Walter Gardner
Thomas Rawcliffe	Wendell M. Hardy
Robert G. Refuse	Peter Carter, Jr.
George Hutchinson	Thomas Rawcliffe, Jr.

Romeo Langlois

METER REPAIR MEN

John B. Wilbur	Justin C. Perkins
Frank Frye	Henry D. Bachus

It also requires from 80 to 100 laborers to keep this extensive water system in the best of condition, that an ample supply may be ours, either for drinking, industrial or fire protection purposes.

EPILOGUE

A period of 146 years has elapsed from the burning of Bedford Village to the destruction of the Vineyard steamer Sankaty by fire in 1924. The intervening years have seen the passing of busy ship-yards. The whaling industry has given place to cotton and silk. Twist drills and wood screws are now made instead of candles. Many other important changes have been wrought during these years. But fires, as always, are taking heavy toll of the resources of New Bedford.

Fire-fighting methods have radically changed. The picturesque, red-coated volunteer fireman with his "hand-tub" is now but a memory kept green by the Veteran Firemen's Association. The steamer has been placed in reserve. Call men no longer respond to alarms pealing from tower bells. A full-paid permanent department, equipped with motor apparatus, now answer alarms. The cries of Fire! Fire! Fire! no longer are heard whenever a fire is discovered. Instead, the city is covered with a net-work of wires, overhead and underground to which numerous alarm boxes are connected, and from which an alarm can be transmitted through "Headquarters" in the space of a few seconds whenever a blaze starts.

The wells and street-corner reservoirs, which furnished the water supply for fire-fighting in former days, no longer perform this function. In their places we now find fire hydrants at nearly every street corner connected to large mains which gridiron the city and furnish an unsurpassed supply of water. Yet, with all of these signal improvements, —our fire losses still continue to mount.

So has come up a new way to reduce our fire waste, and that is by cutting down our yearly burnings by fire prevention work. To the late District Chief Frank R. Pease goes the credit for being the original fire preventionist in New Bedford; for it was while he was president of the Permanent Firemen's Association in 1921 that the first definite steps were taken toward the prevention of fires by that organization. Although this society has sinced been merged with the Mutual Aid, the good work started several years ago still continues. The Board of Commerce, in conjunction with similar organizations throughout the country, has also taken up this work.

It is but natural for us to take an interest and pride in our fire department, just as it is natural for the average person to run to a large fire. Yet, after all, the best way to show our regard for our fire fighters is by doing all we can to prevent preventable fires, and thereby permit our firemen to protect us from unavoidable burnings.

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